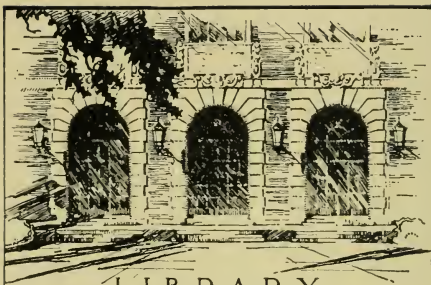




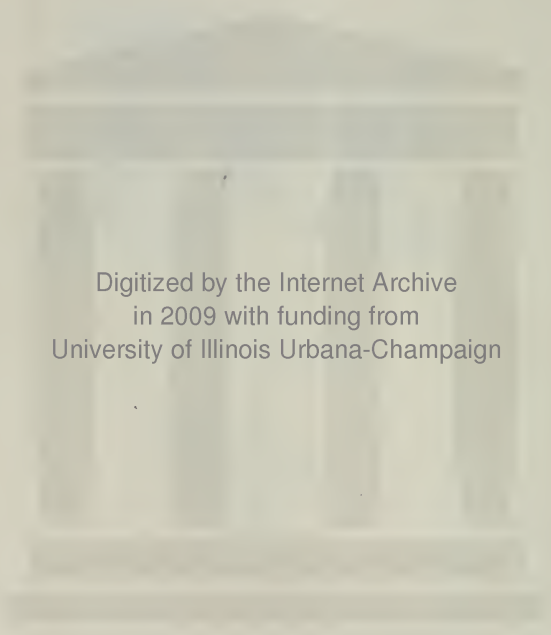
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THE SISTERS.

(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER XVI.

HENRIETTA came into my room, timidly at first, because it was a sick-room, but her eyes sparkled with delight when she heard I was better. She scrambled on to the bed and I kissed her as I had never before kissed her. “But now, Henrietta, go away,” said my mother as she came in, “or you will tire Constance;” and I turned from her to my dear mother, whom I seemed to love better—oh! so much better, than ever!

Still, I was ashamed to meet her eye, and turned my head from her. She thought I was weeping.

“I believed Con that I had made you happy.” — “You have, you have !” — and I threw my arms around her, and felt for a time the oppression of too much happiness.

Yes, though Edward was then some thousand miles distant,—though I had no distinct views for the future,—though my mother had spoken of man’s love as that which blooms, and dies, and is forgotten, I was reinstated in hope, and was then really too happy.

“You have slept well, I think, my love,” said my mother : twice I came into your room in the night, and you were sleeping so tranquilly that your father held a candle to your lips to ascertain if you really breathed.

“My father !” — and then pain came back again to my heart, and I said, “Does he then

know what I have told you?—Oh! my mother!”

“No! he was more than usually anxious about you last night, and once accompanied me to your bedside. Constance, you know not how anxious he has been respecting you! But I have, as yet, told him nothing. I ought, Con, but I dare not.”

Still, while she spoke, a fear crossed my mind that her sense of duty to him would conquer her affection for me; and this, I conclude, was expressed in my countenance, or conveyed in the sigh which I breathed; for, after a short pause, she resumed—“But be happy, my dear child; I will not tell him.”

This was sufficient: I was indeed slightly unhappy, on my mother's account;—but such is the selfishness of an engrossing passion, that all feeling for her quickly faded away, and I remained only awake to the renewed and in-

destructible impression, that Edward had loved, did love me still—ay, and would love me for ever! All former doubts and fears vanished; or if they arose, they were but as “cords touched by the flame.”

My mind being made happy, my recovery, though slow, was regular; and before Charles came home for his summer holidays, I was strong enough to bear removal into the open air. How powerfully did every object appeal to my heart! What deep, what overpowering gratitude did I experience for my undeserved restoration to life and enjoyment! What fervent though secret vows did I make, as I leaned my head against my mother, to devote that life to virtue! Then, how many holy and unutterable sympathies did I find in each object around me! I could see the spot where Edward had arrived on his last return to us with Mr. Leslie—and I recalled all the foolish

vanities of that day, and how they had closed in bitterness and care. I could see, too, a little narrow, winding path, that led to the place where we had parted; and I thought of regained strength when I might trace and retrace it unweariedly, and for ever. The thoughts which came in crowds to my mind, if not destitute of sadness, were wholly free from pain or sorrow. Yet the stillness around us was that of deep melancholy: the distant and faint sound of the splashing of oars in the river, and the shadows of some birds flying over our heads, were the only signals of life. But I have always loved the stillness of summer almost in an equal degree with its beauty. Nature appears, for a time, to have done her work, and to be at rest.

My mother was aware that I was happy in my own sensations, and sought not to disturb me. Ah, how well she understood at all

times that difficult art of good companionship—leaving the mind to its own workings !

Bran lay sleeping at my feet ; and nothing occurred to disturb the quietness of those hours except the occasional inquiries from my father, of how I felt ; followed by loud complaints to my mother of discovered derangements in his household, and divers other little annoyances. The hares had eaten his carnation roots ; a cat had broken the glasses of his hot-beds ; a hawk had flown off with some of the young pheasants ; and the head-groom had gone to a neighbouring fair, and neglected his horses.

Of how frail a texture is the web of even the least aspiring of our joys composed ! I could not remain internally happy while I heard my father lamenting over these little vexations. His complaints indeed, as long as they lasted, always effectually banished every pleasurable sensation from my mind. I fortunately soon for-

got them ; and believe I was indebted for some of my mother's kind indulgence to her knowledge of the impression which they produced on me. On this occasion, at least, I felt convinced that it was so ; for when, on my return to the house, I went to her room, and in her presence took possession of Edward's miniature, she made neither comment nor opposition.

I thenceforward considered it as my own ; but, in spite of all its perfection of beauty, I sometimes found fault with it. It was at once so like, and yet so unlike —so strikingly resembling, yet so inferior. Yet there were regularity of feature, and perfect harmony of expression ; there were the full and ample forehead, the beaming eye, and the living smile that played around the mouth : while the execution and finishing of the whole were faultless. What then could be wanting ? This miniature would have been called by many a flattered likeness

of Edward Hamilton ; but to me, though much was there, much was also absent. Where is the art that can give to features the grace, the sensibility, truth, energy, and mildness which the eye of Love has traced, and which the heart of Love remembers ?

Still I gazed upon it until it looked so natural—so speakingly natural, that I could have almost imagined it a thing of life. Just so had I seen Edward look, when he had uttered words which had torn my heart. I could half fancy I heard him again repeat—“ No, Constance ! you will never know German thoroughly !—No, no, Constance ! you will never play Beethoven !” And as I pressed the painted idol to my lips, I said :—“ And shall I not do these things ?—Oh, more, much more ! If I live, he shall find me what he wishes : and if I die——But no, no ! I shall not now die.” And as I said it, I really felt as if the fiat of life or death depended on my own poor breath.

That false impression, however, did not remain; for I instantly pronounced shame on myself in admitting, even for a moment, so weak a delusion; and resolved to subdue the impetuosity of imagination that was perpetually leading me into error. As I looked again upon the picture which I held, it seemed as if smiling on my intention: and as I again addressed it, I said — “ Why are you not ever near me? But this, your silent image, at least shall be; and I will seek applause, when I deserve it, in your smile, and reproof in that look of fixed and determined virtue. And then, in days to come, with what pride, with what bliss may I not say: — ‘ Thus I did; and thus, and thus for you alone! I loved you, Edward, when you knew it not, with love that bowed me to the grave.’ Then can I tell you, too, how I wrung the secret from poor Mamma; and you will love her more than ever. Ay, and then I shall not grudge her your affection,

for then will you not love me as myself alone, and not as Mrs. Forrester's daughter !”

Thus, while promising to repress all sanguine hopes—to stifle all false illusions, I surrendered my whole being to the influence of both. Alas ! that I should have done so ! But let me remember that I write not to justify the weaknesses of my heart ; I pretend not even to account for, or explain, but simply to reveal them.

CHAPTER XVII.

Bright as a white sail on a dusky sea,
When half the horizon 's clouded and half free,
Fluttering between the dun wave and the sky,
Is hope's last gleam in man's extremity :
The anchor parts, but still her snowy sail
Attracts our eye amidst the rudest gale.

BYRON.

WE are often very braggarts in our hopes, and cowards in our fears. We contemplate the first ; and though they fly before us, we grasp them in idea, and are content. But for our fears, when such as are most rational present themselves to our imaginations, we turn from them as from an abyss which heart and eye alike refuse to fathom.

It is only thus that I can account for the blind security with which I made up my mind to the future, and for the still and calm state of my feelings for some time subsequent to my illness. There was every thing to open my eyes. My father daily, hourly in my hearing, paying some incense to wealth, and coveting it as the supreme good : not as a miser to hoard, but as a spendthrift to dissipate. There were letters too from Edward, announcing his safe arrival ; but speaking of his return as an event too distant to be thought of. Still tranquillity marked that period of my existence. I even sometimes felt happy in the idea of his absence, because of the meeting that would follow it, and that meeting I regularly imaged to myself with little or no alteration day after day. The years that must pass in the interim I generally limited to two or three ; but the thought that they might be extended to more, did not afflict me.

It is one of the happiest faculties of extreme youth,—perhaps the happiest,—that its bright perspectives are never dimmed by any calculation of the effects of time.

My father was of course to alter in character, feeling, and intention ; or my mother—my kind, gentle, pleading mother, (though possessing little or no influence with him in whatever occurred before me,) was *then* to have power to reconcile opposites and effect impossibilities.

But I was possibly more indebted to employment than even to these delusive day-dreams for the comparative peace of mind which I then enjoyed. What I considered useful occupation, became the serious business of my life. In idea, in reality, every thing bore upon my progress, which, though it could never render me equal to Edward Hamilton, might at least win his approbation. I suffered nothing to interrupt it : if illness or pleasure robbed one day of its

apportioned application, it was repaid, and often with usury, on the next.

Still, I regained strength so slowly, that the sea was recommended, and we went in consequence to Brighton. Soon after our arrival, Henry Baldwin also came. He was now unaccompanied by any of his family ; and though Lord Tiverton had a house in Brunswick Square, and Lady Isabella Courtenay was a charming horsewoman, and he was often invited to join her and her father in their rides, we received more than an equal portion of his attention. In short, not to dwell unnecessarily on an event which has but little immediate concern with my story, it was at Brighton that he made me an offer of his hand. I had hoped both offer and refusal might have remained a secret between ourselves ; but such things generally become known, and by some means this reached the ears of my father. His anger,

his indignation, as might have been expected, were extreme. The more useless he felt them to be, the more they raged. He was sensible that no scheming, no contrivances, no concessions on his part would now be of any avail. Mr. Baldwin had taken me at my word, and had left Brighton. I had been at some pains to impress upon his mind that I was really in earnest; for at first he appeared to doubt exceedingly the sincerity of my refusal. Yet it was in no manner equivocal: but Henry Baldwin had been flattered on the score of his wealth; he looked round him, and saw few young men so happily circumstanced, and did not dream of rejection. We generally identify ourselves with that which is most dear to us. Henry Baldwin very properly attached much consideration to his money, and I believe his pride was as much wounded at its want of influence, as at my refusal of himself.

My father could not get the better of it. My true and simple reply to his only question "How I dared to refuse Mr. Baldwin?" was, "Because I never could have loved him;" but this only helped to inflame him the more, and he reproached me with folly and disobedience, in terms which I was ill prepared to bear. It was not only the storm of the moment; that I expected, and could have endured; but it was the everlasting inuendo, the perpetual threat that I should never have such another offer, &c. that irritated and annoyed me. But I will not dwell on the baleful feelings which this conduct engendered: I am quite aware I had not at that time sufficient steadiness of principle to have kept up even the show of good behaviour without my mother's persuasive intervention. Out of respect to her, I was often silent and passive, when perhaps a very different line of conduct

would have been congenial with my feelings, and which, on the score of unmerited provocation, I might have attempted to justify.

The most angry persons do not, however, remain so when convinced that their anger is quite futile ; and at length peace was restored. We continued longer at Brighton in consequence ; for much of my father's interest in Eden Grove was destroyed by the cessation of his views on Baldwin Hall.

My mother gladly consented to lengthen our absence from home. She dreaded solitude for me as much as I longed for it myself ; and, I believe, cherished a secret hope that variety and gaiety would drive from my mind an attachment which to her more matured judgment offered so unfavourable a sequel. On most subjects she read my thoughts truly—but not on this : she had never the smallest conjecture of the utter indifference which I felt for all external

things, or how concentrated my affections had become. Edward Hamilton, herself, Charles, Henrietta, and Mrs. Elphinstone, were the only people of my little world.

It is natural to us all to love those best who are the most intimately acquainted with our minds ; and both man and woman in early youth will be generally found to consider that person as their dearest friend who is acquainted with and indulgent to the weakness of their hearts, and to whom if they do not, they nevertheless might speak of the being they love.

My increased affection for my mother, no doubt, sprang from this circumstance. The name of Edward was very seldom mentioned by either of us, and never with reference to our mutual love. Yet I was happy to be near her, to be with her, and was content to feel that I could, though I never did, reveal to her whatever passed through my thoughts. She too, on her part, seemed to love me with added ardour,

or else, I was better prepared for observing and appreciating it. I have seen many fond, affectionate, devoted mothers; but never one that could bear comparison with her. How hallowed does every recollection seem that is connected with her—even of those events which as they occurred were painful and disagreeable to me!

For, it was as painful to me as to herself, on the repeated entreaties of Mrs. Elphinstone that I should visit her, even for a few weeks, to separate myself from her. Yet now, with what lingering pleasure could I dilate on all the kind arguments she uttered to induce me to do so—to do that which was a real sacrifice to her! I quitted her reluctantly, but my regrets soon vanished: that happy parsonage was not only the scene of many calm domestic hours, but gave me an added store of secret bliss, on which to feed for after years.

I can now distinctly recall the soft music of

the village bells which summoned us to the house of prayer together, and which, as it fell, seemed to awaken more holy aspirations than I had been in the habit of encouraging, but which were more accordant with my pensiveness and seriousness of mind than brilliant and noisy pleasures. For, to however little purpose, I have been thoughtful and serious,—from the time Edward Hamilton left England I became both.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN the close intimacy of retired domestic life, Mr. Leslie, the formidable Mr. Leslie, ceased to intimidate me. I got accustomed to what I thought peculiarity of manner, and instead of permitting myself to be embarrassed by his questions, and search for reasons, I gave him the best I could command; and if they were not such as would convince, they at least served to laugh at. He did not quite break me of the habit of making rash assertions;—that was scarcely to be hoped for: but his “whys,” and “wherefores,” and “I should be extremely

happy to hear on what grounds you have adopted such an opinion," certainly helped to render me a little more cautious, not only in the utterance, but in the formation of my sentiments. His lively sister had none of his sententiousness, and "Never mind, Frederick," or "Why, surely you never think it worth while to account for what you say, and think, and feel, to one, who in argument would split a straw or hair in twain to cavil at," was all the encouragement I met with from her; and I was soon enabled to join in her laugh at the idea of ever having been afraid of her brother. So soon will use disarm even mental superiority of its terrors!

Our style of life was in some degree inferior to that to which I had been accustomed; but there was a peace, serenity, and contentedness about every body, and such perfect comfort in every arrangement, that my already-established indifference to splendour became in no slight

degree strengthened. Mr. Elphinstone was intelligent, good-natured, and fond of his wife; and my witnessing their matrimonial happiness, and how well they contrived to live upon what would have been considered by many an insufficient income, certainly gave no weight to my father's notions of worldly felicity. Then, the sprightliness of Mrs. Elphinstone, whose harmless wit would sometimes set our little circle in a roar, and her blithe good-humour emanating from a heart that sought to make every body cheerful around her,—who, witnessing and sharing such enjoyment, could sigh for scenes where it was not, or attach a higher value to aught that gold could buy?

But all this was little: I in vain attempt to ascribe my taste for the society of the Leslies to their steady virtues or agreeable qualities; these were insensibly enlarging the circle of my affections; but the impressions on my mind of this visit chiefly lived from the gratification

which it afforded me with regard to Edward Hamilton.

Letters came from him,—letters that were passed from Mr. Leslie to his sister, with a “Pshaw!”—and read by her, to be revealed and shown afterwards privately to me,—at first, in mere gaiety of heart, but afterwards, I believe, in compassion. I could not bear railery on the subject, and such words as—“Constance, Edward’s love for you has really outlived a sea-voyage of three thousand miles,” brought all the blood from my heart to my cheeks. I strove to repel all emotion,—to keep all quiet within, and regulate all external appearances; to guard my eye from tears, my cheek from colour, and my lip from motion; but it would not do: her quick glance saw the struggle, and, without appearing to notice it, she threw the letters into my lap, with—“There, read for yourself,” and left me to their perusal.

All who have loved will know and feel how impossible it must be to describe the emotions which fill the heart when, in the absence of the object beloved, some dear memorial of the truth of his affection unexpectedly presents itself to view. But none who have not loved as I have done, secretly, yet not unrequitedly ;—none whose unacknowledged affections have not for a time weighed as a burden on their souls ;—none who have not, like me, added record after record to their heart's rich treasury, as a miser to his hoard, and mused on each and all as the reward of his passion, and the heralds of future and unalterable happiness, welcoming the last as if it were the first, yet prizing the first as a mother the recollection of her infant's earliest word—that word of parental endearment which indicates the tender tie betwixt her and her babe ;—no, none but such can conceive the full tide of bliss that poured upon my heart,

when left to the contemplation of these avowals of Edward's love traced by his own hands. In my mind's eye I yet see those characters distinct and clear before me.

But, oh! frail humanity! With all our sighs after happiness, how little can we bear! How soon may our most blessed emotions be elevated to agony, and the expression of our joys be poured out as the voice of grief! I have seldom wept in sorrow, as I wept over the paragraphs of those letters, which I shall now transcribe from the copies I then took of them. Yet, to others, how differently will they appear to what they did to me! For to me, they were not only dear from the sentiments they expressed,—but as the echo of much that had passed in my own heart.

In one, after describing the life he led, and his early rising to enjoy the cool hours of the morning, he spoke of those hours being

devoted to “Meditation and Constance Forrester !”—He mentioned also the division of his hours, and the utter insipidity of the society he was courted to frequent. But one letter, which appeared to be in reply to some monitions addressed to him by Mr. Leslie, I give entire.

“Coldspring Plantations.

“WITH well-intentioned zeal, my dear Leslie, in reply to my repinings, you point out the numerous advantages of my present abode—not only supplied, you say, with luxuries for the present hour, but having before me the enlivening hope of furnishing myself with affluence for the middle and end of my life. You even enlarge upon the pleasures and advantages of exile and solitude to a contemplative mind. But, Leslie, when you send me arguments instead of sympathy, you disappoint me. Still, if I were convinced by them, I would not com-

plain. But I am not : I admit the goodness of your intention, and that is all. For, under some circumstances, I must maintain, the more contemplation, the more misery ; and, consequently, that the habit of too much reflection may become, under some circumstances, a painful, if not a pernicious talent. Dante makes his souls derive their happiness from this source in the Heaven of the Moon ; but it is not until they desire nothing but what they have, until their will is ‘ in composure settled by the power of charity.’* They can have, therefore, but few prototypes upon earth ; for a man must be considerably below or above the standard of humanity, if his own destiny, his own share in the interests of this world, bear no part in his meditations. And, when these are adverse to his tastes and inclinations, the chances are, that

* Frate, la nostra volontà quieta
Virtù di carità, che fa volerne
Sol quel ch’ avemo, e d’ altro non ci asseta.

Parad. Canto iii. v. 70.

they will have too much. He may feel, as I do, the wisdom and necessity of resigning himself to a mode of life to which he has an invincible distaste; but he will be long, very long before he succeeds, even supposing the rare case of a full comprehension of the precepts of religion, and an entire subjugation of that rebel, the will.

“Where, however, it is otherwise, and the bright visions of youth, though faded, will not depart—will not give place to sobered worldly wishes, or quit their hold upon the heart, when our views extend themselves beyond the grave—the struggles must be frequent and violent to procure even a moderate portion of tranquillity. And too frequently, Leslie, they will be but as the efforts of the blind, who strive to see and cannot.

“After this confession, you will, I trust, no longer ascribe what you term my unreasonable

unhappiness solely to my attachment to Constance Forrester—or consider me merely as a willing hero of romance, who has made a point of becoming *eperdument amoureux* (I quote your own words) with the only girl in England on whom Fate had set her seal of positive prohibition. Since crossing the Atlantic, I have viewed our relative situations in a very different light, and do not now see that as I was then circumstanced either honour or gratitude forbade my at least making her acquainted with my sentiments. The case is now altered: I am a poorer man,—too poor a man to marry. Yet when I think upon the words which you yourself, like a good Samaritan, poured into my bleeding wounds when I quitted England—when I remember that even you, when you praised my strength of purpose, ventured to add you had little doubt that my love would have been, or even *was*, requited, I can-

not but lament my line of conduct, though sanctioned by her mother, and approved by you.

“ It is better, however, that it rested thus ; for, *had* I been refused, I must have now torn her image from my heart ; and *had* I been accepted—oh God ! how could I ever have resigned her !

“ But enough of this : I can still love her—still feed upon the past,—still wish that she were more humbly born—that she were even in destitution,—that she were *not* the daughter of Mrs. Forrester,—that I might now fly to her and implore her to share my few years of residence in this beautiful island, were it but to shield me from the contamination of its morals. Leslie, the only favour I ask at your hands is, that your letters may always contain her name. Yes, if it be merely to say, ‘ We have heard nothing of late of Constance Forrester,’—or even, ‘ We hear that Constance is to marry so

and so.' At times I try to prepare myself for this blow, which must and will come—and even deceive myself so far as to believe that I have succeeded. Yet, fool that I am! I never take up an English newspaper where such a fact might meet my eye, but with fear and trembling.

“ I have lately taken a farm among the mountains behind Kingston, where I hope to be less molested by people than I have been here.”

I have promised to tell the truth,—the whole truth ;—I may not then conceal the wild wishes and intents which crossed my heart on the perusal of this letter. “ I will go to him,—Yes, *I will* go to him,” I said again and again, as I pressed it to my lips.—“ He shall know how dear he is to me, — *I will* go to him, if but to say, I love you—and then die !”

And these words I uttered in broken sentences, as if delirium had seized me, till a sense of their futility broke upon my understanding. When it did, I shed as bitter tears as if the project had been founded in reason and some unexpected event had put an end to it. “Why should I be so stricken?” I exclaimed. To which query there was but the one answer of tears — abundant tears — but nothing more. For to those who arrogantly question the justice of their own destiny, it is rarely given, to trace the hand of Providence in its decrees.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE rapture at first inspired by the possession of my newly acquired treasure, soon gave way to a greater disturbance of mind than I had endured since the days which immediately followed Edward Hamilton's departure. I did not wish him to be happy, yet could not bear to think of his being otherwise. More of revolt established itself in my heart, and consequently more of misery; and, as I thought of the probability of other letters arriving, that intolerable impatience for a more rapid flight of time, so difficult to contend with, and so impossible to control, took full possession of me.

In order that I might receive them, I put off from time to time my return home, till further delay became impracticable; and I took leave of my friends at L—— rectory with more heaviness of spirit than it is usual for persons to feel whose steps are bent towards their homes. It is true, I carried with me additional testimonies of Edward's regard; but these made me quite as miserable, on the one hand, as they rendered me joyous and contented on the other; for they made me think more of the evil of our separation.

It had been a trial that was to pass away;—it appeared now a heavy misfortune that was to endure. The latter seemed lengthened instead of being diminished,—the point of time at which I aimed, appeared to recede as I advanced; and, like the veriest slave of avarice, the more proofs I obtained of Edward's love, the greater became my desire to possess them.

The day before I quitted Mrs. Elphinstone, we had walked together till a later hour than usual; and, with some of that abstraction of mind for which lovers are said to be remarkable, I stood a few moments apparently gazing on the uncommon brilliancy of the setting sun. My lively friend extended her hand towards the west, and said laughingly—

“ Yes, Jamaica lies there,—directly there, Constance, in the direction of my finger! Do you not see a second Orlando there, in groves of dark pimentoes, carving your name upon the bark? No, let me see,—I’m forgetting the most disagreeable fact in the whole book of knowledge, that hours vary in different longitudes. No, it will be scarcely more than noon with Edward, and he is more likely to be now reclining, at perfect rest, under the majestic canopy of the beautiful palmetto, gazing on flamingoes that he sees not, or listening to

humming-birds which he hears not, and thinking—of what should you imagine will he be thinking, my dear Constance?”

“Of the friend, probably, who is so well acquainted with his ‘whereabouts;’ or of Mr. Leslie, whom he so regards.”

“Or what think you of the friend’s friend, who would “let concealment, like a worm i’ the bud, feed on her damask cheek,” prey upon her health, and eat away her heart, rather than give utterance to the wish that now fills it? Well! you are a strange girl; but I shall miss you sadly; and in some of my leisure hours, who knows but I may be idle enough to copy any intelligence that may reach us from the West Indies?”

I pressed her hand in token of acknowledgment,—I tried to thank her in words, but could not,—and we entered the house together; Mrs. Elphinstone saying, as we did so, “Of course,

my dear, you understand that it is because I wish you to be thoroughly informed of the state of the island, and the prices of sugars. All knowledge is useful, you know, as Frederic is everlastingly informing us."

She asked me no questions; and, among all my obligations to her, I perhaps reckon this the greatest,—that she acted on her conviction of my regard, without waiting for my confession of it. How wonderful are the secret workings of our hearts!—even in their inexplicable deviations from what may be almost termed general rules! I could suffer my love to be inferred by my mother, and in this case by Mrs. Elphinstone; but while I placed my whole glory in the attachment which I had inspired, and my whole of woman's pride in that which I felt, I could no more have then said or written, "I love Edward Hamilton,"

than I could now assert that I did not, without leaving the stain of falsehood on my soul.

My only recreations, on my return home, were to retrace the hopes, fears, and employments which had marked the corresponding period of the preceding year, and to search through all the books of my father's library for accounts of Jamaica. And not Columbus himself, when he first reached that land of springs, could have felt more joyful emotions than I did, when my search was crowned with success. I doubt indeed if any curious examiner of dust-covered manuscripts, or lover of black-letter, ever lighted upon a fact that might strengthen a favourite conjecture, or confirm some equivocal dogma, with half the heartfelt delight with which I hailed the reiterated assurance that the bite of no serpent in the West Indies was mortal, and that Jamaica

harboured no animals to desolate or destroy. But if I derived happiness from this source, it was far more than counterbalanced by the descriptions of earthquakes and hurricanes which had occurred there, and some too very recently. Their effects haunted my imagination to a degree that few whose affections have not formed similar visions can conceive. At one moment I saw whole towns overwhelmed, and no vestige left; at another, water gushing from openings in the earth, and thousands of trembling wretches vainly attempting to save themselves from drowning. Then my dreams were dreadful: in them, the yawning mountains appeared to open beneath some victim, and close again, leaving the head emerged, while its distorted lineaments were impressed with terror and with death. In all these pictures, Edward Hamilton was the chief, and sometimes the only figure; and, to add to the horror of the scenes, he always appeared looking towards me with

imploring eyes and outstretched arms, as if I possessed a power to save him which I would not exercise.

How often, after such visions, have I wakened in terror, and in vain tried to assure myself that they were but dreams ! How yet more frequently, when my waking thoughts were so infected, have I lifted up my voice in prayer and wept ! But of what was that prayer composed, and why did I indulge in tears ? Did the petition seek for strength to resist and overcome these frightful phantoms of a disordered fancy ? — Did those fast-falling tears flow in penitence for the idle and perverse wanderings of my mind ? No ! weak, helpless, and unhappy, I felt the want of divine protection, and strove to obtain it ; but for the manner in which I sought it ! Alas ! alas ! I said not, “ Lord, not my will, but thine be done ! ” — but, “ O God ! save him, or I perish ! ”

CHAPTER XX.

Their want of light and intellect, supplied
By sparks Absurdity strikes out of Pride.

COWPER.

HOWEVER deeply the indulged delusions of the heart may interest, they must still give way to the common occurrences of life: mine were often fortunately displaced for a time by domestic duties, and the love I bore my mother and Henrietta, but yet more frequently by persons to whom I would never willingly have accorded a thought.

I had scarcely become perfectly re-established at home, when my old torments, the Bald-

wins, were necessarily forced upon me. The intercourse between our families had not been suspended by my refusal of Henry; it had however occasioned what I considered a more unpleasant consequence, namely, what is vulgarly but expressively termed a shyness. Neither Mrs. Baldwin nor her daughters had ever wished for the alliance, and must in reality have rejoiced in its failure; yet they chose, one and all, to consider it as an offence, and to say to other people, who were kind enough to repeat their words to me, that I had behaved very ill, and treated Henry shamefully. I ought, I believe, to except Charlotte, of whose evil report I never heard more than that I had disappointed her.

Few things are more irritating to a sincere nature than an unmerited accusation, reported to you in such a manner that you cannot, without committing yourself or another, refute or

resent it. I never saw any of these parties without wishing to do both; and I fear I was only enabled to repress the inclination by thinking that the hour would come when I might. Mrs. Baldwin, I believe, in her simplicity, did not comprehend how it could happen that any body could, would, or should refuse Henry; and in the surveys with which she honoured me, I could read in her inquisitive eyes—"How did it happen?"

Miss Baldwin tossed her head, and talked of her dear Lady Isabella; and as her views were now directed to a Mr. Chambers, who was reported to be a marrying man, all her tender inquiries and disquisitions relative to Mr. Hamilton ceased: in short, the Baldwins were such a host, that I could not move without meeting one or the other of them; and these interviews seldom took place without producing some petty remark, the offspring of their

wounded vanity or increasing pride. Henry himself was fortunately absent,—whether for the purpose of avoiding me, or, as rumour whispered, to woo the Lady Isabella, I was left in doubt.

Yet these little things would, I trust, have been as unimportant to me as they deserved, had they not helped to disturb hours that might have otherwise been peaceful. The unquiet spirit of my father unhappily required no additional incentive ; and the very name of the Baldwins at any moment, proved sufficient to recall all his former displeasure against me. He could not forgive me ; he always now called me Miss Forrester, and, trivial as the circumstance may appear, there was an appearance of such unparental harshness in it, that it gave me much pain.

But this was not the worst result of my unfortunate refusal,—for he made it a matter of such frequent reproach to my mother, that

her spirits became sensibly affected. She feared, I believe, that his affection for me was diminished; and her delicate constitution, which had often made her apprehensive of an early death, now gave her more uneasiness than at any former period. She paid more attention to her health than she had ever done before, and talked of the value of her life to me, and that she must strive to preserve it for my sake.

At such times my eyes would fill with tears, and a mournful impression take possession of my mind for a moment; but it quickly passed away; for I could not, even in idea, separate myself from my mother.

About this time a racoon was sent to her by Edward Hamilton, and a letter full of tender anxiety respecting her; and I have little doubt, alas! I much fear—that her wishes for our happiness, and her too sure conviction of my father's opposition, helped to undermine her

precious health. It was the first stroke, I think, (would that I did not think it !) laid to the root of an already tottering plant which required every aid from nature and from art to keep it from falling.

But I did not then consider this ; and when she resigned the beautiful creature to my care, and gave me the letter, I believed her emotions at the time to be as pleasurable as my own. Edward in this epistle had not once mentioned my name, but his expressions of gratitude and love to my mother gladdened me almost as much as any testimony of his regard to me could have done. As long as he thus remembered her, I could never be forgotten.

Affairs in general too were assuming a somewhat improved aspect. The unexpected death of Mr. Harvey, the only intervening person between my father and the barony of Holme, left him heir presumptive to Lord Harvey, and at

liberty to form more splendid hopes than any which he had lately indulged. The course of his thoughts seemed quite diverted from the Baldwins ; and, beholding me in perspective the Honourable Miss Forrester, I once more became Constance. I believe he now rejoiced that I had refused Mr. Baldwin, under the consolatory reflection that I could do much better. Charles, at the same time, ceased to be ‘ poor Charles,’ and was only thought of in conjunction with riches and a title.

But, as he said, he was born to be unfortunate, and that he no sooner approached a blessing, but it fled. In three months’ time, when a few unnecessary hundreds had been expended in support of these better prospects, it pleased Lord Harvey to acknowledge his mistress as his wife ; and report spoke of, *at least*, thirteen children, nine of whom were sons, all born after the secret and undated marriage. It was

beyond hope that they should every one die, and my father's mind relapsed into more than its former degree of irritability and discontent. Henry Baldwin's projected marriage with Lady Isabella Courtenay had been fortunately announced while baronial splendours had floated before him ; and, although it did not prevent him from now glancing at the subject with regret, it spared us some lamentations which he could not for very shame give utterance to, in the teeth, as it were, of his own higher ambition.

But I could notwithstanding trace the veerings of his mind ; and if young people are generally obedient to the moral lessons of their superiors in years, I am sorry to record that I was not of the number ; and whether his approbation on this subject reached the highest point of the scale, or was down at zero, it created in me only callousness or contempt.

This marriage was announced by Henry's family with many a flourish of trumpets; and their ideas of excellence might be gathered from the qualities they praised. "Lady Isabella dressed so uncommonly well, had so much style, and felt her footing in society as an Earl's daughter should do." This was repeated, till more placid listeners than my father were impatient to hear of some other properties. And, I am inclined to believe, the weariness which he experienced in hearing the plaudits of all that Henry and his bride had done, and the anticipations of what, when they came into the country, they were going to do, was one inducement to his acceptance of an official situation in Canada, offered him by Lord Harvey.

His ostensible reasons were, Charles's interest, and the low state of his finances, when he sounded my mother's feelings on the subject, and no doubt they had their weight. My

mother was willing to adopt any measure that promised to make him contented. Peremptory husbands, who disturb the happiness of their homes, have an equal advantage with better ones, in the docility of their wives. My mother was both affectionate and obedient; but what she would have done with the devotedness of love, she now did from a selfish hope that her own hours might be more quiet. Still, when she found that Charles and Henrietta were to be left behind, she acknowledged that this quiet would be purchased at too high a price. It was, however, too late to retract: she must consent to let her husband go without her, or leave them. It would not admit of debate. A school was sought for Henrietta, and Charles sent for from Eton, to pass the few weeks we were to remain in England with us.

They were sad and melancholy weeks to my poor mother; and, indefatigable as she was in

making arrangements for the comfort of her two younger children, there were still many leisure moments for reflection and regret. I seem yet to hear her injunctions to them to write to her,—to tell her every thing that occurred to them of pain or pleasure,—and to be mindful of one another. Their holidays they were to pass with Mrs. Elphinstone; and the hope of novelty soon checked those tears, which the thought of not coming home had at first summoned. In their mother the grief lay deeper.

For me, the scheme was fraught with attractions: the imagination is as little a geographer as a logician; and although I could not but know that there was no more chance of meeting Edward Hamilton in Canada than in Kam-schatka, still to be in the same hemisphere with him offered something of consolation. It seemed to me an agreeable way of filling up an interval of time, which, as I before said, appeared daily

lengthening,—and it would take me from the Baldwins.

But all my father's haste to escape them entirely was vain: before half our arrangements were made, Mrs. Baldwin and her daughters removed to a less splendid habitation, and Henry and Lady Isabella arrived at Baldwin Hall, accompanied by a sister of the bride, Lady Anne Courtenay. I much wished my father to have been spared, on his account as well as my own, the unnecessary heart-aches which I knew the twofold evil of eating a dinner off a new service of plate, and cooked by his own *chassé'd Le Noir*, would occasion. May I be forgiven, if I add, that a cast of the doubly choked Laocoon, which stood in the hall, appeared to me, on that day, but too true an image of the mental pain he would probably endure.

The first interview between Henry and my-

self was a little awkward on both sides. It was an early moment for me to be introduced to his bride; but as I felt he had the greater cause for embarrassment, I soon lost my share of it; and he was too well satisfied with Lady Isabella and the éclat of his wedding altogether, long to retain any.

Never, indeed, were any two people more willing to inform their neighbours of their purchases, their possession, connexions, and content, than were both Mr. Baldwin and his wife. But egotism is very rarely as entertaining to the hearer as to the speaker; and the pronouns *I, me, we, us*, which fall so harmoniously on our ears when proceeding from our own lips, are apt to “strain harsh discords” to those of others.

“I am admiring your ceiling, Mr. Baldwin,” said my mother; “it is admirably painted: the longer I look, the better the deception appears. —I could almost fancy it in reality concave.”

“ Yes, it is very well painted; and so it ought, for it cost an amazing sum of money,—the fellow made me pay as much as Lord Tiverton for a much larger room.—Isabella, do you recollect the size of your father’s largest drawing-room ?”

“ Not exactly;—sixty by thirty, I think, though.”

“ Dear me !” said Mrs. Baldwin to me, when there was a more general buzz, “ what an immense room it must be !—for this, Miss Forrester, is one of the best drawing-rooms in the country, and is scarcely more than half the size.”

The old lady was in a slight degree afraid of her daughter-in-law,—and fear, like death, silences enmity : on this day she forgot her former feud with me, and seemed to enjoy the ease with which she could make remarks that she dared not venture to others.

By this by-play I frequently lost the thread

of the discourse which was passing among the rest of the party—if, indeed, the stray remarks that come out reluctantly before dinner may ever be said to have any. Yet I heard enough to assure me that three-fourths of it at least was composed of Lord Tiverton's possessions and appeals to the memory of Lady Isabella; Mr. Baldwin having either lost his own, or under assumed forgetfulness endeavoured to veil the pleasure he took in these things.

But dinner was at length announced; and Lady Isabella, who piqued herself on her knowledge of etiquette, as her husband rose and directed his steps to my mother, said hurriedly, in a loud and important whisper — “ Lady Anne!—Lady Anne!”

Mrs. Baldwin pinched my arm, and raised her eyes upwards, with that natural expression of astonishment, which unsophisticated people indulge in when persons of rank, in their estima-

tion, commit themselves. And in the course of the evening, when I endeavoured to convince her of the impossibility of my mother being offended at a measure which the conventional laws of etiquette have established, she could only exclaim that she hoped it might be so,—but still, for her part, that she, his own mother, should as soon have expected to be the first person considered, as the sister of his wife, who might be said to be at home, and a young girl too.”

Miss Baldwin interfered, and endeavoured to produce silence by saying—“ But, Mamma, you forget they are Earl’s daughters.”

Yet, this was a fact I think not likely to be overlooked even by the commonest observer, and still less likely to be forgotten by any one so much interested in remembering it. The evening passed heavily :—there was splendour, but no enjoyment ; magnificence, but no mirth ;

and in the pauses that occurred between the detail of the number of Lord Tiverton's boroughs, and the value of his estates in different counties, the cracking of the oil in the lamps, and the loud ticking of the timepiece (*unemblematically* supported by a figure of Time, whose feet were represented as falling on flowers, which his scythe was busied in mowing down,) gave a solemnity to the silence which it was painful to hear, and difficult to break. But at length the evening passed over, and on every account I rejoiced that our promised departure from England would prevent the repetition of so dismal a pleasure.

How marvellous that I should remember such things so distinctly ! How yet more extraordinary that I should willingly linger over them !

CHAPTER XXI.

AS it is my own, and not the history of Canada, that I have professed to write, I will not enter into any descriptions of its social winters and comfortable carriages, or the lovely springs by which they are followed, when Nature, as if suddenly awakened from her trance by some secret word of Almighty power, starts at once into life and beauty ; or the brief and bright summers, and purple lightnings ; or the slow, delicious autumns that come on as gradually as old age should approach, retaining almost to the last some of the beauties of the bygone summer. Yet I saw and enjoyed them

all in rotation ; and every sublime appearance of Nature became a double pleasure to me, as I registered it in my memory, to be hereafter described to Edward Hamilton.

My mother promoted all my wishes, as far as lay in her power, with regard to seeing the country or its inhabitants ; and the high official situation which my father held, rendered it not difficult for me to join parties, as anxious as myself, to make pilgrimages to cataracts and rapids, and to visit native Indians. I was most particularly indebted to one family for arrangements made for my gratification ; and had it not been for the attachment with which one of its members honoured me, the recollection of the hours I passed in their society would be a source of unmingled pleasure.—But of Colonel Forbes hereafter.

I was often in the midst of gaiety and song, and, flattered by the attentions which I received,

my good spirits often rose to a height that I loved not to acknowledge ; but never for one moment had I to reproach my heart with swerving from its first affection. My moments of gaiety were always followed by regrets, and a comparison of my own position with that of Edward Hamilton, or rather what I considered to be his.

In little things I was superstitious. I one day imagined, on looking at his miniature, that he frowned on me reproachfully, and I became more impatient than ever again to hear of him. I wrote to Mrs. Elphinstone, begging her to write immediately ; yet when her reply came, I trembled to open it.

And well I might. Edward had been in England, had paid a visit to Eden Grove, though he knew its inmates were no longer there ; but had quitted it, and was again in Jamaica. The restlessness which this information

gave me, may be better imagined than described. Canada, which I had begun to love, became insufferable to me : its skies, softened and almost lighted by its snow-covered soil, ceased to charm me. I had often for hours, of a winter's night, watched its shooting stars—the deep, broad shadows of the close-planted trees, almost as distinctly marked in the moonlight as in the most brilliant sunshine—indulging happy thoughts. I no longer possessed this power. I fancied every thing which could be most afflictive to me ;—that Edward had gone purposely in our absence, yet could assign no reason why he did so ;—or that he was perhaps, though the thought was too dreadful to be dwelt on, going to marry another. In short, I became ill, and the climate was pronounced unfavourable to my health. My father proposed accompanying my mother and myself to England, and afterwards to return to Canada alone.

But an unexpected and melancholy event frustrated the latter intention. Letters from England, stating my brother Charles to be seriously ill, were quickly followed by others announcing his death. I cannot describe the effect which this dreadful news in the first instance had upon me : it seemed at once to rouse and stupify me—to rouse me from my own private unhappiness, without giving me power to share in that which was general.

My father, subdued by grief, seemed a different being; and, much as I had really loved Charles, I shed more tears for the grief I saw my father endure, than for the loss of my brother.

To me, death, even to the young, appeared nothing, compared to the suffering of daily sorrow.

My mother made efforts, in the first instance, to command her own feelings, in order to con-

sole my father. In all things, where the happiness of others was concerned, she seemed possessed of unlimited power over herself. In the present instance, it was fully illustrated. Before our embarkation, she was calm, even to what they who were unacquainted with her heart might have termed apathy. But when I saw her eyes tearless, while those around her wept, I felt full surely that nature could not thus be repressed without a very painful recoil, and trembled as I thought of the hour when, the first shock having passed away from the minds of others, a mother's feelings would force their way. Day after day, during our voyage, she would come upon the deck of the vessel, and gaze for hours in silence on the wide expanse of waters. As I stood by her side, I often endeavoured to draw her attention to what was passing around us, but never with any continued success. The subjects of conversation

on which I durst venture were too limited for it to become a constant resource. I could not mention or make allusion to Canada; for it was there the tidings of our calamity had reached us: and England was still more dangerous ground; for if she had never quitted England, she might have received Charles's last breath. I could only imperfectly guess what was passing in her mind; but it appeared to me that this melancholy satisfaction having been denied her, was a heavy aggravation of her misfortune.

CHAPTER XXII.

Nostri intesi dolori, nostri guai
Son come più o men ciascun li sente,
E quanto io debil sia, Signor, tu 'l sai.

MICHEL ANGELO.

WHEN we landed at Portsmouth, the cruel question of—"Where are we to go?" was asked by my father, in the subdued accents of deep-seated grief.

He, who had been so impatient to reach England, that the swiftness of our passage had seemed tedious and oppressive to him, now first felt the misery of returning home. He proposed Mrs. Elphinstone's, or Bath, or Clifton,

or Southampton; but my mother would hear of no expedients to delay her return to Eden Grove, and thither we proceeded. He, for whose sake it had been principally quitted, was beyond the reach of worldly care; and as we passed the Lodge gates, the same feeling passed too powerfully through the hearts of all, to be controlled. It was there we had taken our last leave of him,—and it was there Henrietta had said they would both meet us when we came back.

But this burst of grief passed away: we were all relieved, and each made some effort to talk of the future,—of Henrietta's being sent for, of domestic arrangements, and out-door improvements. Still, there was much in my mother's manner that distressed me: when she spoke, it was hurriedly; and though there was no incoherency in what she said, I could not persuade myself that her mind followed her words. I sometimes fancied it would be good for her

to be left alone, but had not courage to propose or adopt such a measure.

On the following day she expressed a wish to walk ; and without penetrating her intention, I accompanied her to all the favourite haunts of her poor boy. The saddle-room, where hung the harness for his last pony ; a little creek in the river, where he had loved to launch his miniature men-of-war, and in which he had once, when very young, narrowly escaped being drowned ; the piece of ground which had been his garden, and where unfortunately some of his tools still remained ; the rabbit-house, long fallen into disuse, which he and Edward Hamilton had made together ; and a hazel copse-wood, at the extremity of the grounds, to which he had often led us, to show some newly-discovered bird's nest ;—every spot was filled with a thousand tender associations, and she lingered long and shed tears in all.

“ Dear, dear Mamma !” I said repeatedly to her, and she folded me to her heart ; but she herself only spoke when by the river-side ; and as she recalled the accident that had there befallen my brother, she exclaimed, “ Why saved ?”

But when she had done so, she hid her face in her hands, and sank upon the earth and wept. On her return to the house, she complained of fatigue, and said she would go to bed. This did not alarm me : I, on the contrary, hoped that, from having indulged her grief, she would be better : but I was deceived. Day after day she grew weaker ; and when resort was had to medical aid, she pressed her hand to her heart, and said it would do her no good. For several subsequent weeks, she continued so nearly in the same state, that I hoped the worst was over, and considered it only the natural effect of grief upon her delicate frame. During that period, she would

make me read to her passages from the Bible and serious authors; and when she observed the struggle it cost me to obey her, or that I paused from inability to proceed, with all that warmth of affection which had ever marked her behaviour to me, she would say:—
“Wean me from the world, Constance!—wean me from yourself!” And at times, when she herself felt better, and thought I could bear her admonition, she would discourse of my future duties, and, without mentioning her own death, point out what they would be in consequence. And yet, though I heard her do this; though I wept to see her weak and suffering; though I had a bed placed in her dressing-room, and regularly slept there some hours in each day, that I might be permitted to watch over her at night, I was unconscious of her danger. Henrietta’s return home had been delayed in consequence of my mother’s illness.

We were afraid, by any increase of nervous excitement, of adding to her debility. But at length she urged it so constantly, that it was permitted, and my father consented himself to fetch her. Before his departure, when he came to take leave of my mother, she sent me out of her room for a few moments, desiring me, however, quickly to return. I did not do so till I was summoned. My father was sitting by her ; and as I approached, she held out her hand to me and blessed me. She said she had been making promises of obedience and goodness on my part to my father, and that he had been all kindness in his assurances to her of considering my happiness. Her voice was steady and cheerful as she said this, and her eye unusually brilliant ; but I think I never felt so oppressed as when I took her hand and raised it to my lips. My father was not less so, and recommending her not to

exert herself any more, stated the probable hour of his return, and left us.

That day, owing to the absence of my father, the expected arrival of Henrietta, and one or two other circumstances unnecessary to record, I did not leave my mother at the hour I usually took rest, but remained standing by her side. She retained my hand and grasped it repeatedly, pronouncing my name at intervals, and once, Edward's, and my father's: and as she did this, she took her wedding ring from her finger and put it into my other hand. I thought the movement singular; and she again murmured "Dear Constance!" — "Beloved child!" and her feeble hand pressed mine more firmly as she did so. Alas! she was dying, and I knew it not! She had the consciousness of death upon her, and wished to let me know she felt who was near her. And I, accustomed as I was to her kindness and her caresses, knew

not, suspected not, why she so often repeated my name, or why she so long retained—so fervently grasped—that passive hand ! And when she closed her eyes, I believed it was for slumber. At length I bent over her to give her one gentle kiss that might not disturb her ; and as I did so,—oh ! God ! — her cheek was cold beneath the pressure of my lips !

* * * * *

I believed, when first I began to write my history, that my heart and hand were nerved to the undertaking,—that I could contemplate things long past as if they had occurred to others and not to me. I believed that I could recount my own emotions as a traveller the dangers he has passed ; yet I wished and hoped to paint them truly and vividly, and to give to the minds of others a faithful transcript of what passed within my own.—This is impossible. To afford even a feeble idea of what I felt, I must live over

again through that dreadful scene — I must throw myself into an abyss of misery from which nature recoils ; for I could recall much that would again harrow my very soul ! Oh ! the bitter sense of utter destitution that came over me, when, tearless, powerless, unable even to call for aid, I gazed on the inanimate form of her whom I had so dearly loved, and who had given me life. I clung to her as if I could revive her.—“ Mother !—dear mother !” I cried, “ you must not, shall not die !” — and I kissed her. Oh ! never when living had I so kissed her, nor did I believe that life and death could be so near and yet so distant, or that she could die, and I live : and again I called upon her name — softly, as I had often done, to ascertain if she slept—then loudly, wildly, as if to rouse and awaken her.

And thus they found me—and they tore me from her—yes, violently tore my arms from

around her—and when I screamed and implored their pity, they dragged me from her chamber, watched me like a criminal, and guarded me as a prisoner. When my father came to me, he wept and turned from me; and when they brought Henrietta to me, she gazed upon me as a thing to be dreaded. But the sight of her did me good; for I remembered the years of affection I had enjoyed, and which she could never know; I clasped her to my heart, and the tears that would not fall for my own loss, fell abundantly for her's. I vowed I would be a mother to her. Her reply was, “Dear, dear Constance!” And the voice of love, which I thought silent for ever, recalled me to more living but more healthful anguish.

Yet I hope all orphans, even poor and friendless ones, do not feel quite as wretched and forlorn as I did, when I wandered alone about that large mansion, with no external symptom of

affliction remaining except the garments we wore —when Henrietta had been sent back to school —and my father had ceased to weep before me— when my faithful Helen, who had watched over me, and felt for me, had ceased to look mournful — when all inquiries had been answered, all letters of condolence replied to—and there was nothing but the throbbings of my own heart, to speak to me of her who was no longer near me, but of whom I thought far more than ever I had done when she was alive.—And sometimes I wept, when I heard of gaieties in the neighbourhood, that others did not feel as I did, though it was unreasonable to expect they should. And I was hurt beyond the power of words to express, at the bare idea that she could be forgotten. A relation to whom she had been kind, wrote to me at this period, and was guilty of the indecorum (for it was

indecorous at such a time not to consider my feelings) of putting a coloured seal to her letter. I believe, that for a long while, if not for ever, I considered that woman as deficient in gratitude, delicacy, and kindness of heart. I silently dwelt upon it as a proof of the ingratitude of the world, and the hard unkindness with which benefits may be requited, till it assumed the form of an injury.

Then my father's grief and altered looks seemed to me sometimes to have been produced more by the death of Charles than of my mother—and this thought was almost madness to me. I had no right to make this assumption, and scarcely any rational grounds on which to raise it, but my mind was without aim or occupation, and my heart weaker than a child's. I was, however, sufficiently punished for this error by the pain it gave me, and by the up-

braiding of my own conscience, when any word or look escaped my father, which proved that it had been one.

Then, in the long summer evenings, he would walk with me from compassion; but if our ideas ever flowed in concert, we seldom communicated them, and he, as well as myself, grew tired of this constrained intercourse. It had, however, one most beneficial effect,—it gave me faith in his love, which I had never possessed before. This necessary belief awakened too a deeper sense of duty towards him than I had hitherto imbibed, either from my own reasonings on the subject, or from the events which I had witnessed, and, in time, I gained confidence enough to propose requests to him, whose object was simply my own gratification. My mother had left some pensioners; she had put some children to school, and clothed others; I was anxious to hold her place towards the un-

fortunate, and solicited to have an allowance sufficient for this purpose. I no sooner named the necessary sum, than it was granted to me. I grew emboldened by success; and one day, when my father made a remark on my solitary mode of life, I pronounced the name of Henrietta.

“True,” he said: “we will think of it.” And though he execrated the very name of a governess, he did think of it; and solely, I believe, on my account consented that her education should be completed at home. How I thanked him for this! Sorrow had greatly altered my father, and in fact had made him another being to me. But the influence of sorrow, though great, is transitory: as it yields to time, former habits return; the mind has been subdued, not altered; and, in most instances, the character remains essentially the same.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE choice of a governess was a difficult and important matter: but we were what is termed fortunate; for, turning aside from prodigies of talent on the one hand, and treasures of goodness on the other, we decided on a young person of little experience, but who had received a good education, and whose disposition appeared particularly amiable. Feeling a young creature (for, though older than myself, she was still young,) thrown on me, if not for happiness, at least for those attentions and courtesies which fill up so large a portion of our lives, my mind was roused to energy and my

heart to enjoyment, more than even by the return of Henrietta. There were many remarks which I could make to Miss Stevenson that I could not have made to a child ; and having somebody, besides my father, to speak to, became an inexpressible comfort to me. We read some of the same books together ; and I took my part in the instruction of my sister, who was delighted to be at home, and possessed one of those docile tempers which are easily moulded to good. Miss Stevenson was contented with her progress, and charmed with her dispositions ; but I, while I fully appreciated the one, sighed over the other. Henrietta learned with difficulty, and her mind appeared to me as if it would never expand into comprehensiveness. I had then so many foolish notions of the necessity of great and numerous attainments, as to feel unhappy from the reflection, that she would acquire mediocrity in few, and excel-

lence in none. Yet she had ambition; but her very perseverance, which ought to have consoled me, seemed to me but a proof of her blindness with regard to herself. She was now in her twelfth year, and one of the incitements which I sometimes made use of, when she was alone with me, was to tell her of the pleasure her poor mamma had felt in thinking she would be clever, and the satisfaction it would give her friend, Mr. Hamilton, to find her so. I moreover enumerated his many pursuits, accomplishments, and excellencies, together with his opinions with regard to the talents of women. This was precisely the sort of gossip that childhood loves. She would often recur to the subject, and ask such innumerable questions respecting Edward Hamilton, why he had gone, and when he would return: thus his name, which I had had difficulty at first in pronouncing, became a familiar household word.

As long as I kept out of society, Miss Stevenson and the school-room were sources of pleasure to me ; but on the first visit I paid, I discovered that I had done the most imprudent thing in the world and had adopted a measure which everybody condemned. This, indeed, was not said openly ; but, was I not afraid ?—my father not old—Miss Stevenson young, and perhaps, artful — her very love for Henrietta, which I had mentioned with complacency in itself, an interesting, and therefore alarming circumstance. All this broke on me gradually and disagreeably : not that I was afraid,—my father was the last man in the world to be guilty of forming an imprudent match ; and Miss Stevenson, I felt tolerably assured, was not artful. But when Lady Isabella Baldwin spoke of the probability of his marrying again, the fear of his doing so first took possession of my mind. The idea of a mother-in-law, on Henrietta's

account as well as my own, was fraught with pain ; and from that hour I resolved never again to oppose the wishes of my father when they led to gaiety. I thought, by diverting his mind, to keep off this dreaded misfortune.

If any thing could teach us humility, we might learn it not only from the failure of our best-laid schemes, but from our frequently contributing by them to the very results we most wish to avoid.

My father submitted to me, early in the spring, the choice of going to London, or remaining in the country. I did not hesitate but decided for going to London. Our mourning was thrown off, my mother's jewels were reset for me, and I appeared in the gay world in my new character of heiress.

If this change of parts gave me any added attractions, or produced for me any additional adulation, I was scarcely aware of it. London

was dear to me as associated with the remembrance of Edward Hamilton; but every pleasure which I had there shared with him, when now repeated, if in its first glow it ever pleased, on reflection was full of bitterness. Like the apples on the Dead Sea shore, those pleasures were fair to the eye, but “ashes to the taste.” Dinner parties, which were my father’s principal enjoyment, were seldom even of momentary interest to me; but I endeavoured to do the honours of his table cheerfully. I had such an innate horror of dissatisfaction leading him to supply my place by a wife, that I spared no pains to meet his wishes or please his guests; and often, amid the splendid banquet, did this tormenting idea come across my heart and blanch my cheek with fear, till, like Macbeth at the sight of Banquo, I could have gladly “broke the good meeting with most admired disorder.” It pursued me with the constancy of jealousy. At home

or abroad, I never lost sight of it; and whenever I looked on Henrietta, it was doubly armed with power to distress me.

These powerful and painful presentiments were "no unreal mockeries." I exerted my understanding to the utmost to repel them as shadows; but they soon became too well founded and were too soon more than realized. Miss Baldwin, as has been stated, had married during our residence in Canada. A few weeks after my dear mother's death, I casually heard she had become a widow; but it made little or no impression on my mind; and when I first met her in London, in all the paraphernalia of splendid woe, it was like the revival of some unpleasing dream. I had never before met with a personification of that grief, which can weep with one eye for the dead, and with the other ogle the living; and the hypocrisy of it disgusted me before my anticipations of having

her for a relative began to disquiet me. My fears had been before vague and distressing; they now became concentrated and bitter. There was a deep plausibility in the manners of Mrs. Chambers which often veiled her real character; and where this is the case, it generally happens that those who do penetrate beyond it imagine more of evil than really exists.

To Henrietta, Mrs. Chambers was all sweetness, and her reticule brought her so many fine and agreeable presents, that the child at first contemplated it with the same degree of wonder that the reader regards the pocket of the Grey Man in Peter Schlemil. There seemed no end to the abundance of its stores. In my father's presence, there was towards me a degree of consideration, a deference to my opinion, that, if I had not seen through it, would have flattered me. Then, she was rich, and so perfectly independent in her movements, that there was

no possibility of avoiding her. She had no home duties, and, as I had apprehended, she accompanied her brother and Lady Isabella into the country, and thus was fixed near us for the summer and autumn. With this anxious fear perpetually hovering over me, I learned to lament those hours of loneliness and imagined isolation which I had found so insupportable the preceding year.

I forgot the dread which I had felt of any successor to my dear mother, and now said, "Oh! any other!" And I upheld myself in this by the recollection of my mother's distaste to the society of the whole family, and which had never been clearly explained to me. But from Helen (who, of course, could only speak on conjecture) I learned that my father's attentions to Miss Baldwin, and Miss Baldwin's flirtations with my father, when first she came out, had not only occasioned much conversation in the

neighbourhood, “but given, as she well knew, much uneasiness to her poor mistress, and she for one should be sorry to see Mrs. Chambers, though she was so rich, presiding at Eden Grove.”

Servants who have lived long with you acquire an aptitude in reading your mind, and a freedom of speech in addressing your prejudices, not easily guarded against. I had made no confidante of Helen, and I was humbled at her speaking thus openly, as well as afflicted at her information. But I had now lost all hope; and I mused on the virtues of my dear mother, and the frivolity of her who would now occupy her place, till even Edward Hamilton was displaced for a time from my heart. My state of mind was dreadful; and the more so, that for want of some able and intimate friend to speak to on the subject, (for I could not express what I felt in writing,) its workings

met with no counteraction: it was left to feed upon itself, and worse nourishment scarcely could have been administered.

I looked upon Henrietta and myself as sacrifices. Resistance, I knew, would be useless; and half my days were passed in tears. They were not without cause. After some months of painful suspense, Mrs. Chambers's weeds were discarded; and my father, having first made a long preface of assurances that I should find no difference in his regard, announced to me himself the evil tidings of his second marriage.

“May it make you happy, Sir!” was all I uttered; and ran to seek Henrietta, over whom I wept more bitterly than when her mother died. I locked my hand in her's, and we sat and walked thus together for hours, she, by turns, endeavouring to console me, and inquiring the cause of my tears, which I could not explain, or weeping with me. My father found

us thus together ; I believe, he felt that my sorrow was natural and pitiable ; for he sent Henrietta away, and said, more gently than I could have expected:—

“ For Henrietta’s sake, if not for mine, Constance, I had hoped you would keep her young mind free from prejudice : — for you, perhaps, it is hard to give way in little things.”

And this was all the view my father took of the matter. I, in vain, said : — “ Oh, it is not *that* !” I could not explain to him what it was ;—I could not tell *him* the insult I felt his choice was to the memory of my mother ;—or how my heart recoiled from *another Mrs. Forrester*.

But he had spoken kindly ; though I could not speak to him, I took his arm, while he continued to assure me of his love ; and that it was only in matters of etiquette, which, he hoped, I had too much sense to regard, that I

should experience any difference. It was hard to be so misunderstood ; and I was indignant at his insisting so much on so petty a cause for my grief. He became distressed in his turn. I do not indeed think that he was even then quite satisfied of the wisdom of his election, or was entirely free from the apprehension that Mrs. Chambers's wealth might be purchased at too dear a price. He certainly, after some minutes' silence, and before he left me, said—

“ Would to Heaven I were not compelled !
—but I must—Constance, I must ! ”

The subject was never more mentioned by either party—and Mrs. Chambers, fine as milliners and jewellers could make her, was brought to Eden Grove as *Mrs. Forrester*. She absolutely worshipped dress ; and as long as the novelty of it lasted,—as long as her thoughts were occupied by her new veils,—and she could

talk, as if it were the business of her life, of the comparative becomingness of mourning and bridal attire, of the number of bombazine gowns she had worn out in her widowhood, and of the incredible expense which they had been to her,—there was little in her conduct to distinguish the former Miss Baldwin from the present Mrs. Forrester. But our interests in some degree clashed, or she fancied they did, and I was soon led to fear that no forbearance, no caution, on my part, could shield me from the ill-nature of a weak and vulgar-minded woman, who regarded me as her natural enemy, because I was the daughter of her husband. The fault was possibly my own in a great degree;—I was perhaps neither so cautious nor so forbearing as I thought I was—certainly not so much so as I ought to have been—this, at least, the event proved. I began at the wrong end:—I strove to disarm her of malice, when, in a worldly

point of view, it would have been wiser to have rendered myself invulnerable to her remarks ;— for to betray sensibility to injury or insult, is to become the target at which the unfeeling will shoot for ever.

I had not then, as now, the power of ascribing bitter and sarcastic taunts, as well as greater errors, to the bad passions of the species brought into play by peculiar circumstances. I was not sufficiently enlightened to make due allowance either for the want of education, or the narrow views engendered by a bad one. To do this, indeed, in cases where our self-love is intimately concerned, we must not only have made considerable progress in philosophy, but be in possession of some portion of that Christian charity which thinketh no evil.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ON this part of my history I enter with great reluctance and some pain. Time and events cancel offences ; and it is both difficult and disagreeable, when the heart has pronounced forgiveness, to recall them from that oblivion to which they have been consigned. But justice to all parties requires it, and they may not be omitted.

Dr. Franklin, in his valuable Memoirs, numbers his failings or mistakes, and impresses each on the mind of his reader by the candid confession of its being the first, or second, or third, &c. great error of his life. I have

observed no such order in registering mine ; but I must ever consider it as one of my chief errors that I sought not more carefully and unremittingly to subdue an impetuosity of imagination that caused me to magnify both the good and evil which befel me, and increased an irritability of temperament, by nature too susceptible of outward impressions for long continued happiness. I could set a watch upon the door of my lips, but could not close the many avenues through which the sarcastic remark, the illiberal innuendo, or contemptuous sneer, found a ready passage to my inmost soul. Myself,—my charities,—my music,—my pursuits in general,—my love of Henrietta,—nay, even my religion, were all in turn attacked by my stepmother.

She discovered that she could annoy me ; and, like Tom Frizzle in “ The Spectator,” who, if the company were talking of “ Douay

or Demain," would contrive to drag in his atheism and a philippic against priestcraft, she would step out of every subject, even her favourite one of dress, for the purpose of attacking me. I well remember that one day, when she was examining the prints in "*La Belle Assemblée*," the only book she ever did examine, after describing the alterations she had determined upon in one of the dresses there represented, she thus continued: "*Rouleaus* instead of *flounces*—ten of one instead of six of the other—the sleeve shall be shorter—the front a *stomacher*, and the back plain, not full; for, *I* see no harm in such things. Thank Heaven, *I* pretend to be no better than my neighbours. *I* go to church, and say my prayers on a Sunday, and that is enough for me. No, no, *I* am no Pharisee. I wish some people, who set themselves up for being so *very* superior, could say the same."

Will it, can it be believed that such expressions, because of the intention with which they were uttered (not certainly for their point), were to me like the swords of enchanters, which never fell without wounding? Shakspeare says, "There is a soul of goodness in things evil, would men observingly distil it out;" and from my very weakness I could draw an excellent moral for others, would they avail themselves of it. For, had I been less vulnerable, Mrs. Forrester had been less cruel. Looking to secondary principles, there is surely no inducement so great to aim at a high degree of virtue, as the absolute and salutary influence thus secretly exercised on all around you.

I have said I could set a watch on the door of my lips, and so I ultimately did, but not, alas! till bitter revilings, indignant reproaches, and ungenerous recriminations, had escaped them—not till I had been humbled to the

dust,—not by what had been said to me, but by what I had suffered myself to utter. I was haunted by the echoes of my own words—pursued by the dreadful consciousness, that I carried the seeds of hatred in my breast. I cannot reveal all the pains I took to hide the frightful secret from myself; but I remember them well, as well as the startling horror with which I first read “De Montfort.” I could deceive myself no longer. It laid bare my unexamined heart to my own inspection; and, though I shrunk at first from the view which it unfolded, I ceased not from the scrutiny till I had, with many tears of humiliation, acknowledged its hitherto undiscovered depravity and inert capability of evil. But tears of humbled pride alone will not amend, and it was long before those of penitence came to my aid or relief.

My painful convictions gave at first an impatient bitterness to my feelings, and rendered

me for a time even more sensitive than before to the trials to which I was exposed. I felt as if I were a living mark for the ill-natured taunts of Mrs. Forrester's tongue; but my self-accusations were too vehement and too sincere to be silenced by sophistry, however plausible or soothing. I knew myself diseased, and resolved to attempt a cure. I became silent under provocation: this was a great point gained; for, though in the first instance it arose as much from resentful pride as from any better feeling, it at length proceeded, I hope, from worthier motives. Every exertion of self-command, by the effort which it cost me, proved how much I had been formerly to blame. Yet how frequently, before I had arrived at any degree of improvement in manner, or amendment in mind—when I had framed good intentions, and repeated fixed determinations, did some trifle, lighter than air, disperse the one

and destroy the other ! How often, when I had indulged in visions of excellence, and my soul had seemed to take wing and blend itself with them, did some petty circumstance or worthless word bring me back again, as it were, grovelling to the earth, the fetters of passion strained, but not broken ; the bands of error loosened, but not shaken off !

Frequently did I take up my pen, and endeavour to unfold to Mrs. Elphinstone my manifold grievances ; the invariable unkindness which I experienced ; the undue indulgence given to Henrietta, hurtful alike to her mind and heart ; the slights put upon every body who could in any degree be considered peculiarly or exclusively my friends, and even the illiberal reflections cast upon poor Miss Stevenson. But I oftener destroyed my letters than sent them : I felt ashamed of such communications. I blushed for myself as I reflected that I had

shrunk from confiding love, and yet without solicitation could unreservedly speak of what at least bordered upon hate. And, was then the most ungentle passion, I said in trembling anxiety, stronger within me than that devoted love which had hitherto known no check? Could its dominion displace or weaken the sacred affection felt for so many years, and which had been so closely mingled with every joy or sorrow, hope or fear, that had visited my heart! No; the apprehension made me miserable: I despised myself while drawing the comparison, and then for having made it; for the one was the light of my being, the other a dark but passing cloud that only for a time obscured it.

It was a light to which I turned daily and hourly for comfort. I looked to the moment of Edward Hamilton's return as one of emancipation to myself, and of redemption to Henrietta.

Some circumstances had occurred which made me believe my father would not now oppose our union ; and it is not necessary to analyze too severely the indistinct resolutions which I formed in the event of his doing so. Edward's letters since my mother's death had been brief and few ; they were always shown to me, and I generally contrived to maintain possession of them. As his, they were valuable to me ; and, had I possessed none of dearer import, would have been yet more so. But, from Mrs. Elphinstone I received extracts, or entire letters, from time to time, more than sufficient to feed such love as mine, I was going to say, for thousands of years ; but I do indeed believe, that such was my perfect faith and exclusive adoration, (is that term misapplied ?) that had the period of Edward's absence been trebled, had I in the interim grown old and decrepit, even to the palsyng of my faculties, my heart would

have nevertheless remained the same. I derived no inconsiderable pleasure from the belief that Mr. Leslie's opinions were changed or changing ; for, in one of his letters, Edward appeared to be combating some hope which his friend had held out to him. It was tinged with the melancholy that seemed to have become a part of his character ; and although I fear I must seem to be trespassing on that diffidence with which we ought to speak and think of the personal or mental qualities ascribed to us by others, I shall venture to insert it,—first premising, that, at the time it was written, Lord Harvey lay at the point of death, and my father was now his acknowledged heir.

“ How different is your doctrine become, my dear Leslie !—But it is now too late ; and yet I thank you for it. I am a richer man certainly than when I left England ; but though you tell me that Constance is still single, and unneces-

sarily add, still lovely too, how could I presume to offer my hand to the daughter and heiress of Lord Harvey!—No! I must ever lament that I did not seek her love in earlier youth,—it might have changed my destiny; and with fewer sacrifices, I might perhaps have been now blest with her affection, and thus have escaped the contamination of this vile island. Leslie, I dare not think of all that I have lost, in exchange for the paltry wealth which I have gained.

“ But enough!—I used to moralize on Forrester’s want of manliness in repining incessantly when his fortunes were at a lower ebb. I have learned now a greater degree of charity, and have purchased by experience the sad knowledge—that one constant and secret sorrow may consume all strength of character, and blight even intellectual ambition. I have long struggled against this sorrow, and have possibly thereby

prevented a greater extremity of evil ; but like the rust that eats into iron, or the water that wears away stones, it will force its way, and in time the whole mind must become its banquet, or the whole heart its prey.

“ This letter is a tolerably strong proof of it ; for when I sat down to write, I meant to have confined myself to descriptions of the state of the island, and my plans for the future, but those I now defer till my next.”

This letter was followed by some few others, in which he appeared reanimated by hope, and to take a more cheerful view, both of the past and of the future ; till at length, the period of his return was finally fixed, his estates were to be sold, and the last communication received from him before he quitted Jamaica concluded thus :—

“ And then for England, and Constance Forrester !”

“ England and Constance Forrester ! ” — I mentally repeated these words as I had formerly done “ He loves me. ” Sleeping or waking, they were ever before my eyes,—ever like a strain of music in my ear. They came not, till I had known the sickness of deferred hope, but when they did come !—Can nothing in nature convey what they were to me ? Nothing—even the breath of spring, as I had witnessed its effects in Canada, would feebly represent the sudden and bright colouring which they gave to my mind. All gloom, all care fell from it—happiness was again within my grasp—and I trembled to think that I might yet seize it. My spirits were more buoyant than they had ever been, even in childhood ; and, in their escape from the thralldom by which they had been so long depressed, they seemed to imitate the butterfly when it first soars into the air, and to revel only in sunshine and among flowers. I had lived long enough to know better ; but, alas ! I

seemed neither to have profited by the experience of others, nor by my own reflections; for I abandoned myself to a fulness of joy,—a blessedness of anticipation, as if regrets could never return, and sorrow never touch me more.

But I have somewhat anticipated the order of events, and must now return to speak of a few which occurred in the long period which I have thus briefly passed over.

CHAPTER XXV.

I WAS in my five-and-twentieth year when my father became Lord Harvey, and Henrietta and myself the Honourable Miss Forresters. It was an event that had its full effect on us all, though in very various and disproportionate degrees. By me, however, the effect was most sensibly felt, for Lady Harvey herself, whom it raised, at least, to the seventh heaven, could scarcely rejoice more in the musical salutation of your Ladyship, than I did in her change of name. She would now no more be called Mrs. Forrester,—an appellation (which though once to me “like all sweet music blended into one,”)

had always, when applied to her, sounded to me as “sweet bells jangled out of tune.” It was the strongest and most inveterate of my prejudices, the first to assail, the last to leave me—or, to speak more truly, which never left me. It seemed to me a profanation to apply it to one who was, in my estimation, the very antithesis of her to whom only I considered it of right to belong. By what I must think a disagreeable concurrence, her Christian name was also the same as that of my mother; and I had therefore enjoyed no respite from painful associations on this head, till both “Emily” and Mrs. Forrester merged into that of Lady Harvey.

I was sorry for my father, and the melancholy feelings which this unexpected turn of fortune created. The loss of Charles was by him doubly felt and regretted. Time had softened every thing that could be termed acute on the subject; it had reconciled the father to the loss of his child, but not the Baron to that of his heir.

The preface of Honourable to my name had many charms, because I believed it would be agreeable to Edward Hamilton. Though but the younger son of a younger son, he was of an ancient and honourable line; and when I numbered the titled and the distinguished, from whom he was immediately or collaterally descended, I was pleased on his account to have a higher place in society than that accorded to the daughter of a private gentleman. Yet I might be said, in some degree, to have felt the worthlessness of rank and the inefficacy of station in society, to impart happiness: I had often looked through cottage windows, and half envied the apparently happy group seated round a blazing fire. Wherever there had appeared unity of feeling, kindness of heart, and sympathy, I had paused and said, — “O that for me some home like this would smile!” with as much fervour as the houseless old man from whose heart Campbell makes the wish

proceed. For *me*, surrounded as I was with comparative magnificence, luxuries without number, and all that wealth could command, my every wish fulfilled or anticipated—could I unfold to others how little all this was to me, I might possibly check some sighs for such blessings as were mine. But how may I hope that my pen can achieve in many instances what my voice failed in effecting in a single one? Should I say, “Reader, if your lot be cast in poverty, in obscurity, in dependence, as long as you have hearts to love you, fond bosoms on whose affections you can rely through sickness and sorrow, in hope and joy, for comfort and counsel, repine not—covet neither rank nor riches, for their possessors are often your inferiors in content of mind, and in all that imparts real happiness,” how may I dare imagine that I shall gain belief, when one individual* could

* The individual alluded to was my sister's governess.

hear the same or similar doctrines repeated by me again and again, and yet remain perfectly unconvinced? Miss Stevenson's life might have been called "one long, long dream of *home*." To her I vainly said, where there is no happiness there can be no home. In vain, too, did opportunities present themselves: when the same truth might have flashed across her mind, from my experience, she always shook her head mournfully, and maintained that still it *was* home. No length of residence, or continuity of kindness, mitigated her sense of dependence. She was grateful, but could not be happy. I should not however have introduced her name here, had not Lady Harvey, after she had had the charge of Henrietta for four years, succeeded in displacing her for a more experienced, or, in truer English, a cheaper instructress. Miss Stevenson's salary had always been considered enormous by Lady

Harvey ; for Miss Stevenson knew nothing of the harp. To my regret she was exchanged for a person who did know the harp and nothing else.

My sister consequently fell under my tuition for the more needful pursuits, and our new residence of Holme, at which we were to pass the greater part of every year, being more remote than Eden Grove, the occupation was both interesting and advantageous to me. She was now fifteen, and improved daily in personal beauty ; the red hair which had displeased Edward Hamilton's eye was changed to a dark, rich, and beautiful auburn, and all the sweetness and softness of her character were stamped in living characters upon her lovely features. She looked like " nature in the world's first spring ;" and I began to feel proud and yet sad, when people who had known me at the same age pronounced her like what I had been.

I took too much interest in my self-imposed task for it to yield only pleasure ; for I fear I was more frequently disappointed than elated by the result of my efforts. I loved Henrietta dearly, and estimated her affection as it deserved ; but it was my misfortune to overrate talent or acquirement, and I could not reconcile myself to her very limited portion of both. All that her mind did contain was good and beautiful ; but, like those rocks which produce trees of spontaneous growth without soil, there was no depth of fertility—all was superficial. She possessed vivacity, and some originality, and her kindness of heart knew no bounds. It appears to me now strange not to have been satisfied with these qualities ; but I was not. I fell into the common error of taking myself as a model for my pupil. All that I had done I wished her likewise to achieve. Whatever had been easy to me, I judged, ought to be so to her ;

and I sighed in despair whenever I discovered it to be precisely the reverse. I read to her passages from my favourite authors, which I considered she ought to understand because I had done so at her years; but though she listened attentively, (too attentively, for her attention arose from a wish to please her teacher, and was not commanded or rather compelled by the spirit of the writer,) she never seemed electrified by strokes of genius as I had been, and had therefore predetermined that she ought to be. Her soul never appeared to me penetrated with enthusiasm by the endless wonders of nature or the surprising beauties of art. She could admire, and approve, and be pleased; but she could not be enchanted, or delighted, or raised beyond herself. She could read Metastasio, and preferred him to Dante or Shakespeare. This was dreadful — and I strove, in order to eradicate so great an error — to ex-

plain and analyse genius to her — as *if* its properties, “those powerful strings that charm the minds of gods,” could ever be made known where they are not felt !

Still, Henrietta’s was a very feeling, a very gentle, and a very amiable mind. And it was well that it was so, otherwise my persevering wish to force it into one particular channel might in the end have been injurious. I am almost afraid to inquire if my perseverance and anxiety might not, in a slight degree, have arisen from a wish to oppose Lady Harvey, who “saw no good in culture, and hoped Henrietta would not be a bookish young lady,” with a thousand other commonplaces to be met with at all times, and in all societies, but which often mislead young persons with regard to the estimation in which mind really ought to be held.

My friend Colonel Forbes, I believe, saw through my foible, but partly respected me

for it, while he tried to reason me out of it. His name has been mentioned before ; for it was in Canada that we had become acquainted, and his peculiar attention to my mother there had secured to him from my father and myself an hospitable reception, whenever he visited us after his return to England. He had happily arrived when it was in my power to give him one ; and before my father's second marriage, he had gained a footing in the family of which he was determined not to be deprived. He was considered by the world in general a humourist, who thought himself privileged to say any thing he pleased ; and, although he knew himself to be insufferable to Lady Harvey, would pay us long and frequent visits, either deaf to hints, and impenetrable to mere suggestions, or making some such direct appeal or inquiry, as "Did your Ladyship mean so and so ?"—that it was difficult for any degree of art to evade. If he

observed any neglect of attention to himself, he always redoubled his politeness, and became ceremonious in the extreme.

He was many years older than myself, and upon this circumstance our intimacy was founded. He loved literature, and had quitted the army, he said, in order that he might worship the two Minervas before he died. Yet he sometimes disclaimed all reading except the newspapers, and once drew my attention from a work which I was intent upon by the startling question of—

“What are books?”

“Books!—Shall I say to you, as I often say to myself when they disappoint me—‘A book’s a book, although there’s nothing in it.’”

“No—that will not satisfy me to-day—I repeat my inquiry.”

“It is such a large question.”

“Yes—but, for the love you bear them, give me a short answer.”

“ Sheets of paper, then, of various forms and textures, duly bound or stitched together.”

“ Try again—that will not do.”

“ Are you really determined on a serious reply ? — if so, transcripts—faithful, beautiful transcripts — of the mind of man.”

“ Good—but go on.”

“ And better, the outpourings of the heart ; which, by revealing what others have felt and suffered, become the soothers of sorrow and the strengtheners of duty.”

“ Sometimes. But I beg your pardon—you have not finished, I see.”

“ Eye-glasses of the mind, too, that would for a time give to the intellectual powers qualities undreamt of, firmness to the judgment, wings to the imagination—”

“ Stop ! stop !—I will have nothing to do with wings ; but I did not, in truth, give you credit, Miss Forrester, for having read, I will not say

so far, but so well, as to regard them as mere instruments to obtain better knowledge than they can impart."

"Nor do I—to me they have been ever-flowing springs."

"Nay, proceed not, for you are falling fifty fathoms below yourself—I mean, below your last answer: they are not springs—only rivers, my dear Miss Forrester,—mighty and majestic ones indeed, issuing from the 'living fountains' within.—'Mind, mind alone—bear witness, heaven and earth'—I need not, I am sure, go on."

"No; the mind that produced those lines did bear within itself beauty and sublimity;—but how should we have known it without the book?"

"Not at all, perhaps—except we had made the discovery ourselves; and that is what I want to bring myself and you and all the

world to, and not let those rascals of authors forestall us in every thing and every where. What has given many of them their proud immortality, but that they have reflected upon us, or upon those like us? Why should we look on literature, as we too often do, as the source from which every thing else flows, instead of inquiring whence it came, and whither it leads? In short, instead of imbuing our minds even to saturation with the thoughts of others, why should not we be creative? The same mines are open to all; why should we not delve where they have dug—look as they have looked? but by this time, I dare say, you are tired, or have guessed to what point I am tending.”

“ Neither the one nor the other. You appear to have given a new impulse to my mind, a clear and distinct interpretation to many floating and half-formed notions of my own; but the only conclusion I can anticipate, is,

that we are to throw all the books that have been written to the dogs, or have them burned like the library of the renowned Don Quixote, and write new ones ourselves."

"You are mistaken, wholly mistaken; so wide of the mark, that I see I must steer directly towards it, to make you at all understand me. Yet I hardly know how to accomplish it. But I must try nevertheless: if books then do so much less for us than we can do ourselves, ought we to be unhappy if they are not the prevailing passion of all whom we love?"

"Oh! now I comprehend you clearly. You think me needlessly anxious about Henrietta."

"I believe I do. You measure by a high standard of faultless excellence the abilities of your sister and pupil, and find her wanting. I compare her with other girls, and in her utter freedom from all affectation, her graceful hu-

mility of mind, her deference to others, I find her almost a model of perfection."

"Do you really think this—or is it only to flatter and humour me?"

"No; believe me, she reflects the highest honour upon you—and now let us walk."

"Willingly; and Henrietta shall go with us."

We found her in her garden, and Bran frolicking near her. I stooped to stroke my dog as he ran towards me; and Colonel Forbes remarked, he should like to know the history of my canine favourite, from the heartfelt joy painted on my countenance when he approached me.

"It is soon told," exclaimed Henrietta; "Mr. Hamilton left Bran behind him when he went to the West Indies, and he has been Constance's guard and companion ever since."

“ Mr. Hamilton !—the same Mr. Hamilton I have heard Lord Harvey mention, I conclude.”

“ Yes, it must be,” said Henrietta ; “ for we know no other.”

The subject was dropped, and we agreed to stroll to the neighbouring village. Henrietta, now tripping on before us, now returning to make some proposal or remark ; and as I looked on her, all life and gladness, I thought nothing more lovely had ever been seen upon earth. There was a serenity in her aspect, and a glow of health in her appearance, united with such youthful elasticity in her movements, that made her appear the very personification of content or cheerfulness. The country people, who doffed their hats, or dropped their low curtseys as they passed, turned round to gaze on her ; and even the children of the village seemed to pay her extraordinary homage.

We paid a few visits to cottages where we

were well acquainted ; and while Colonel Forbes and I were making some inquiries in one of them which did not interest Henrietta, she ran on ; and when we again caught sight of her, she was entering a dwelling at some distance from us.

“ Who lives in yonder cottage, Mary ?” said Colonel Forbes to an old woman who was passing.

“ A lone widow, an’ please you, Sir, and my lady, who has been lang ill, puir thing, and mony on us thinks she has gettin’ the typhus.”

On hearing these words, I flew rather than ran along the ground, till I reached the dwelling, which I entered, breathless and unable to speak. On a miserable bed lay the unhappy being, livid with disease ; and by her side stood Henrietta, bending over her very breath, and holding a cup of liquid to her parched and fevered lips. Fear and horror made me at first

utterly powerless ; and in my eagerness to remove her from so much danger, I fell on the floor with violence, and my upper lip was laid open by the fragment of an iron hoop, against which I fell ; but at the time I was not sensible of this injury ; and as soon as I recovered the use of my voice, I seized the cup which Henrietta held in her hand, and said, “ Fly, fly ! go to Colonel Forbes ! ”

From my manner she believed something disastrous had befallen him, and instantly left the cottage. All was squalid misery and abject poverty around me ; but the unspeakable relief which her absence gave me inspired me with almost a wild feeling of joy, yet without depriving me of self-possession. I approached the invalid with caution : she was too ill to have been disturbed by my precipitation ; and when I proffered the beverage I had found Henrietta administering, by an inclination of her head she

declined taking more; and while debating whether I could now leave her or not, I was forcibly dragged away by Colonel Forbes.

Once, however, beyond the sphere of infection, he permitted me to make what arrangements I pleased with some neighbours of the poor sick creature, on whom I could rely, that would secure to her good advice, and more trustworthy attendance. He told me he had left Henrietta in safety, and we soon met her approaching us. As long as we were within view of the people of the village, she pressed my hand in her's, in silence.

Her whole frame was in tremour, and her heart seemed full to oppression: I had never seen her so deeply affected, and was therefore the more moved by her constant repetition of—"Dear, dear Constance!" and her burst of grief and gratitude when we were left alone, and she saw the blood flow from my wounded

lip. I made light of it, and in fact had experienced no pain from it, but it was completely laid open, and for its cure required greater skill than my own. It is singular, that my preconceived notions of Henrietta's gentleness and placidity should have had so great an influence over me, as at all times to have occasioned me much surprise whenever she exhibited any indication of strong feeling: it affected me at the time; but if afterwards I meditated upon it, I could not comprehend it.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ON our return home, we told our tale : resort was had to surgical aid for me, and precautions were taken with Henrietta, but in vain. In ten days, the blooming and lovely girl was reduced to a perfect skeleton. Waking, she was as a spectre to look upon ; and asleep, she was the image of death. I did not before know the extent of my love for her, or how dear she was to me,—not only on her own account, but as the child of my mother. I believed every day would be her last ; yet the crisis of her malignant disorder soon passed, and they assured me that her youth and fine

constitution would shortly restore her to what she had been—that she required only time and care. It was impossible for me to believe them, or to think that any creature so changed, so emaciated, could ever again know the blessing of health, or be restored to beauty. I tried to encourage every suggestion of hope that offered itself to my mind, but the sight of her destroyed it. She was to me as one dead; and when she slept, I doubted if she would ever waken. Death appears not properly as the King of Terrors till he has seized some one whom we dearly love; till then, the apprehension of his power is feeble and within control. But if he have snatched such a one from us, how easy to fear on the slightest symptoms of danger, that all who are dear to us will become his immediate prey. My father felt for me and with me; and this shock, though so much lighter than some which had preceded it, certainly had a much

deeper, and, if I may be permitted the expression, more beneficial effect on his mind. He appeared to regard this dangerous illness as an infliction on himself for not having sufficiently considered his daughters; and from this period I was sensible of a very marked change in his manner towards myself. But few, I hope, will comprehend the nature of the emotions which I experienced when I first became convinced that my father loved me, for there are few, I hope, who can doubt a parent's regard.

Lady Harvey, during my sister's illness, had talked of her nerves, and herself, and her sensibilities, (for, under all circumstances, she could talk,) till, I believe, even the servants felt a degree of disgust towards her. And when Henrietta was really recovering,—when I had ceased to watch the growing tints on her cheek, and to regard them as so many several miracles, and had therefore leisure to observe and think

of other things, I began to have a sincere pity for her. She had been *with* us in an hour of trial and fear, but not *of* us, and stood an isolated being, where she might have been a beloved one. She had made extravagant professions of regard for Henrietta; and, attempting to be consistent, had made equally extravagant professions of sorrow. But no affectation can supply the deficiency of real sympathy; — no veil of art conceal the want of feeling. “As small a drop of pity as a wren’s eye” will soothe the hearts of many sufferers, but its utter absence can never be supplied.

When Henrietta regained strength, we were recommended to travel for a few weeks, and to take Bath in our route. Colonel Forbes met us there, and it was not till at our first meeting when he observed

“The generous action dignifies the scar,”

that I was quite aware of the wound on my lip being remarkable. Lady Harvey had often called it disfiguring, and affected to lament it ; but the remark and lamentation made no impression upon me, till I found others exclaim on my being altered. I believe, indeed, my anxiety for Henrietta had changed my appearance considerably ; for, when she had quite recovered her bloom and beauty,—that bloom, which I had feared would never return—if her illness was spoken of, it was sometimes remarked that Miss Forrester looked like the invalid, not Henrietta. My father once said to me : “ Constance, you have sacrificed your beauty at the shrine of affection.” I laughingly told him, it would come back again ; but I had no words that could convey to him the happiness his tenderness and kind expressions gave me, or the secret hopes which they led me to encourage. His confidence and love for me seemed so great,

that I felt as if I could have fearlessly led Edward Hamilton towards him, and said “Receive him as your son.” My mind was in this enviable state of positive and anticipated happiness, when I received Edward’s letter from Mrs. Elphinstone, as has been already mentioned, and concluding with these endearing words: “And then for England and Constance Forrester!”

Henrietta’s education was what is termed completed,—that is, she had done with school-rooms and governesses, and I had ceased to torment her or myself by needless solicitude respecting her mental progress. Her health had become too much my primary care for any attainment to appear as important as it had before done. This daily improved, and the union of positive enjoyment in her recovery, with the discovery as it seemed of my father’s love, and my secret hopes, rendered the first fort-

night of our residence at Bath almost too happy to be borne. I strove to conciliate Lady Harvey, and if possible to make her happy. I felt no longer any animosity towards her, I no longer retained the feeblest recollection of the worst feeling that I had ever discovered in my nature.

But there soon arose delays with regard to Edward's arrival, and my impatient restlessness of spirit returned with double violence. It is true, this did not last for any length of time; yet the long period of his absence, when first I had confronted it, was nothing in comparison to the six months that were now so unexpectedly and unwelcomely added to it. Every hour brought heaviness on its wings, and I felt more fully than I had ever done before, how completely I had surrendered my heart to the dominion of passion. Still I made the reflection without bitterness or self-re-

proach, and rather, I fear, prided myself upon it than otherwise, humbled as I sometimes felt at my entire want of patience, when I divided and subdivided the six months before me, and said, thus or thus will I do, and then there will remain but so many months, weeks, days, and hours. But, in spite of my arrangements for seeking employment in something beyond myself, and the sphere of my own emotions, in the commencement of this long half-year, I found the reckoning of Juliet but too true, that there were indeed many days in the hour, and was thankful to whoever or whatever cheated me of one of them:—to Henrietta, if she would make me walk with her,—to Lady Harvey, if she would be uncivil,—and to the most tiresome acquaintances, if they would but be ridiculous. Bran was more frequently stroked and caressed than ever; and when I had an audience, I repeated anecdotes

of his fidelity and sagacity till I became suspicious of myself,—that is, of troubling my hearers with a twice-told tale. Thus one slow lingering month passed away; and I have dwelt on its tediousness, because I thought I then knew the utmost weight and weariness of time. We quitted Bath, but not before Colonel Forbes had, as I imagined, noted the variation in my humour, without being able, as I judged, to penetrate the cause.

We paid a short visit to Eden Grove, and then returned to Holme, to pass a few months prior to Henrietta's introduction in London the ensuing spring. The arrangement was painful to me, and I believe I fairly wished the interval run away with, or that I could sleep till it had elapsed. Heavily indeed was I punished for my idle and vagrant wishes, and cruelly and painfully was the dreaded space filled up.

We were scarcely resettled in our home, and

had not indeed resumed all our usual habits of life, when I was called upon to be a nurse to my father. But I will not dwell again upon the anxieties and apprehensions of a sick-chamber. Henrietta's rapid recovery from a more apparently severe disorder, made me in this case more sanguine, yet not wholly so. I seldom quitted him: on the plea of consideration for Lady Harvey's feelings, I obtained her sanction of remaining near him, and endeavouring to supply her place. I saw that her presence, and continual talking annoyed my father, and this justified me in assuming an appearance of unusual courtesy, to keep her as long as possible away from him. But there was no necessity for any long practice of art: in less than six weeks I lost my remaining parent, and Henrietta and myself were orphans.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IT is rare that the opening of a will does not create much dissatisfaction and some surprise, many comments, and pretty general condemnation. My father's formed no exception to this rule. I had certainly the greatest cause for gratitude and content. Lady Harvey was outrageous: no consideration of propriety or decency checked her violent exclamations on the small addition made to her before handsome jointure, and on the injustice of not making an equal division of the property between Henrietta and myself. It was indeed a strange thing to me, that, with but two daughters I

should be left as an eldest son, a reversion only being stipulated to Henrietta or her children, in the event of my not marrying, and a fortune of six thousand pounds bequeathed to her. I was thus, at the age of eight-and-twenty, left uncontrolled mistress of more than common affluence, and at a moment when the expected arrival of Edward Hamilton in England rendered wealth of more than double value to me. In truth I am afraid that my tears for my father were too soon dried, and that I have thus cursorily passed over the melancholy event of his death, because I am aware in my own heart that my grief was not then proportionate to my loss. I had indeed, in the first instance, been more shocked than grieved, and subsequently I had arrangements to make which occupied both my time and thoughts to the exclusion of that regret which I ought to have felt, and which I should be glad now to reflect that I had.

In the midst, however, of my gay dreams for the future, I had some generous intentions towards Henrietta,—some beneficent schemes with regard to all who could need either my money or assistance, which, if revealed, would perhaps be considered in a slight degree redeeming. But I had one difficulty to overcome, which seemed insuperable: I could not, consistently with the respect due to my father's memory, propose to Lady Harvey a separate residence, and the same, I knew, could never be agreeable to me. All liberty of action or of thought, the prospect of which so much delighted me, ceased the moment her image mingled in my visions, or her voice fell upon my ear.

It was however fortunately indispensable that we should quit Holme, and I ventured to propose our removal to Eden Grove. At first, there was no answer; but, at length,—did I dislike Bath? Her nerves were dreadfully unstrung;

she had gone through so much, and her medical advisers were of opinion that a country residence was not suited to her complaints. This was an opening not to be resisted. I thought Bath had agreed with her, but had an invincible distaste to it myself as a place of constant abode:—if agreeable to her, therefore, Eden Grove should be my home, and Bath her's.

All was soon and amicably arranged: we were both so cordially sincere in the wish to be separated, that every difficulty was obviated as soon as started, except with regard to Henrietta. On this point there was a slight contention. Lady Harvey said, she could bring her out so well at Bath, and that the interest of her fortune would more than support her in elegance. I waited but for this; and having observed that the road to Lady Harvey's heart was through her purse, I said, that whichever of us took possession of Henrietta must also take

charge of her expenses, for that her fortune would certainly be left to accumulate. A little hesitation, a few hems, some retreating steps about the advantages of Bath, and a few concessions in favour of London, paved the way to a perfect acquiescence with my wishes, and I was permitted to bear away Henrietta, if not in triumph, at least with an elation of heart that too nearly resembled it.

Once established in the home I loved, one of my first employments was to re-adorn my little study with its decorations of former years. It had been, and now became again, the repository of all Edward Hamilton's gifts and performances. For years I had hid them with the jealousy of a miser, and am ashamed to think of the childish gladness with which I now removed them from the trunks in which they were deposited, to place them where I could gaze on them unceasingly and unsuspectedly.

I was rendered still more happy by a visit of a few weeks from Mrs. Elphinstone,—a pleasure that had been of very rare recurrence since the death of my mother. She had become a widow, and had no family, and I looked forward with no common satisfaction to sharing my time and happiness with her. The former has been more than realized; but for the latter, my banquet has been scarcely ample enough to admit of division.

By the time she left me, the spring was far advanced, and, occupied by my secret hopes and expectations, I would willingly have remained where we were; but I was assailed on all sides by letter, by word of mouth, on the unkindness of keeping Henrietta in retirement. Lady Isabella Baldwin offered to be our chaperon whenever or wherever we needed one, and we removed to London, not with the intention of entering fully into its gaieties, for we were still

in deep mourning, but of giving Henrietta some of the pleasures suited to her years.

The first party we went to was a concert, half public, half private, a mixture of professors and amateurs, at the house of Mrs. Gordon, a sister of Colonel Forbes. It promised much entertainment; and when the invitation came, Henrietta implored me to accept it. The rooms were crowded to excess, and Henrietta was separated from me by two rows of seats; but she looked round to me from time to time, to tell me by her smile how happy she was, and how much obliged to me she felt for bringing her. Colonel Forbes was near me, and occasionally, between the performances, pointed out to me different individuals who appeared struck with the beauty of my sister, and repeated to me the inquiries that had been made of him respecting who we were. "Indeed, Miss Forrester," he added, "you do

not know the sensations you occasion. A gentleman who had for many minutes been gazing with undisguised admiration on Henrietta, just now asked me her name. I told him, and he exclaimed, ‘Impossible!’ and before I could ascertain who he was, Sapio began his last song, and I have now lost sight of him.”

On this information, I turned round, and commenced a search with my eyes through the apartment. I was agitated to an extreme degree, without knowing wherefore, the strong presentiment which possessed me being in part overcome by a brief and sudden review of the facts I had last heard from Mrs. Elphinstone, and which told me, my idea that it could be Edward Hamilton was beyond belief. I sat down to endeavour to regain composure; for the very beatings of my heart were audible to my own ear. I strove to reason with myself upon the excessive folly I was indulging; but

in vain ; the excitement had been too deep, too great to be thus allayed ; the prediction of my soul would not thus be put to silence. There are moments when all-powerful hope assumes the form of prescience, and we act in obedience to its dictates, as though the coming event had been revealed to us by some preternatural prophecy. I rose from my seat with the intention of exploring every apartment, of examining every countenance ; but before I could extricate myself from the spot where I stood, at the farthest extremity of the room, I beheld the long-loved, cherished being—for whom I had lived—for whom I could have died. No words can describe such emotions as I then felt ; the memory itself retains but an imperfect recollection of them : to such, tears alone can give relief ; but tears cannot reveal to others the joy, spreading into anguish, whose interpreters they are.

Those around me thought me overcome by

the music; for music was still going forward, though I heard it not, and for a few moments I gazed uninterruptedly on those features which were graven on my heart. An air of deep melancholy was spread over them, and his mind appeared lost in reflection. "He is thinking," I said, "of the past, and oh! of my mother, whom he can never see again."

He was leaning against the wall, and the light of a lamp fell so directly upon him, that I could distinguish a slight but well-remembered mole on his forehead. His complexion had suffered from the tropical climate he had inhabited, and was many shades darker; but his countenance looked to me more gloriously beautiful than I had ever beheld it. He was pale indeed, but his paleness only heightened the expression of noble mindedness and beneficence for which he had always been remarkable. As I gazed, tears came again to my eyes:—ah!

why did not some guardian angel then whisper “ Weep on, weep on ! though still so fair to look upon : he is changed ! alas, how changed ! ” Could I then have borne it ? No ; yet I think I should have sunk instantly into a happy death.

But to return :—I made one more effort to approach him, and took Henrietta in my hand, without acquainting her with my purpose. I had indeed no power of speaking. Before however we could move half across the room, he was gone. The company had already begun to depart, and it was easy to discover that he was not among the scattered few who remained. Farther search was useless,—farther hope of an interview that night was vain. Our carriage was soon announced, and we went home. I endeavoured to turn my disappointment into joy, by the reflection that I should now more composedly bear the sight of him on the ensuing

day. But I slept not that night :—I repeatedly entered the apartment of Henrietta, and kissing her as she lay, half hoped, half prayed that she, so beautiful, so fitted to inspire a noble and lasting affection, might be as happy and blest as I was, in the disposal of her own. She sighed in her sleep as I stood over her—and my own bright and full-blown hopes seemed suddenly overcast, as by a summer blight, with an apprehension lest her destiny should not be as brilliant as mine. It is impossible to account for such misgivings,—it would be yet more difficult to plead for, or excuse them

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MY many hours of wakefulness formed a bad preparative for a day of anxiety and expectation. All bodily as well as mental strength seemed to have utterly deserted me before noon. "Not yet, not yet," I said: "how strange! how wonderful! Should *I* have so delayed?—Would to Heaven I knew where to seek him!"

And then the distant sound of some approaching carriage, or the trampling of horses, or the firm, quick-marked tread of the passers-by in the street, ignorant alike of the throb of pleasure and of pain which their advance and

retreat occasioned, threw me again on hope, and made me exclaim—"Fool that I am!—it is not yet too late—this, this is he!"

I often rushed forward and opened the door of my apartment, in order to hear more clearly the knock which I felt persuaded would come. And this not only after the first, second, and third disappointment, but after the twentieth, thirtieth, fiftieth. But at length night came, and Henrietta, whom I had disposed of for the day, returned home;—it was impossible to be longer deluded.

"How ill you look, dear Constance!" was Henrietta's remark when she first saw me; "how very ill you do look!" were her last words before we parted for the night. But I had no sense of indisposition. When she left me, I took a book and attempted to read, and as I did so, I said, "I shall enjoy this quiet hour." I had been alone, perfectly alone, the whole

day, and nothing could well exceed the external stillness by which I had been surrounded ; yet the tumult of my own emotions had been so great, that I seemed to have been for hours in the midst of noise and confusion, and now first to enter into solitude. But I could not read : I turned rapidly over page after page, while with imagined self-collection I brought hurriedly together accusations and reproaches, apologies and defences for and against this unpardonable neglect, or justifiable delay ; when suddenly the thought crossed my mind that, perhaps ignorant of my being in London, Edward had gone, or would go, to Eden Grove to seek me. Yes, where our love had grown ; where he had parted from me, he would naturally hope to find me. He perhaps that very day had known much of the torment which I had endured, and was possibly at that very hour consoling himself, as I now might do, with

the thought of the morrow. Oh ! happy respite from severity of pain, when the heart *can* plead in extenuation of the anguish it has suffered !

My decision was at first to go to Eden Grove with the earliest dawn ; but I had so fully argued myself into the belief that Edward Hamilton had been already there, that I at length resolved to wait the event of the ensuing day, before I ventured to remove. If he came not before twilight on the morrow, I resolved I would then go into the country, and await his coming for one week. There is always comfort in a settled plan of action ; and though some tears of doubt and apprehension would start into my eyes as I considered mine, it did for a time both soothe and uphold me. Towards the morning I fell into a deep sleep ; and when I awoke it was so late, that if, as I had judged, Edward had really been to Eden Grove on the preceding day, it was no more than

reasonable to expect him at any hour. With revived hope I again awaited him, but with none of that acuteness or vehemence of emotion which I had before felt. The eagerness of expectation was checked by a doubt of how I ought to meet him, and with every tremour of disappointment there mingled an indefinite feeling of shame. I was altogether a different being, actuated, it should seem, by opposite motives to what I had been the preceding day. For what I had concealed then from Henrietta lest I should betray a too-exceeding, and, as I feared, an unfeminine degree of joy, I now sought to hide, lest her young mind should be startled and shocked by the unreasonableness of my sorrow. Providing against the worst, I two or three times mentioned my intention of going to Eden Grove that night, and of being compelled to remain there for a week, and the shortness of the period prevented her

making any inquiries with regard to the cause, or regretting our removal from London. She seemed to watch me with curiosity, as well as affection, and her suspicions put me yet more upon my guard. Yet, notwithstanding all my care, two or three times in the course of that miserable day, she had to rouse me from abstractions of wretchedness so deep, that I seemed not to hear or understand a word that was addressed to me. When brought back to myself, my voice faltered and my tears fell, and in my endeavour to blind Henrietta, all that had disappeared from my mind seemed to return. I tried to excite my attention by talking on various and indifferent subjects, but the effort was too great to be long continued.

Evening again came : I inquired of Henrietta if she should be afraid of three hours' drive by moonlight. "Not in the least," she replied, and I ordered my carriage to the door. Rapid

movement seemed to allay the perturbation of my mind: it was near midnight when we reached Eden Grove, and I felt happier and better than I could have dared to hope. I had left a strict charge in London that all letters or cards should be instantly forwarded to me, and that the precise period of my stay should be made known to every person who called. I seemed to have entered into a sort of compact with myself that it should not exceed seven days; partly perhaps because I felt the impossibility of my patience extending to a longer period. The first, second, third, fourth, and fifth days passed away, I scarcely knew how,—sometimes in hope, sometimes in despair, believing him first ill, then forgetful, but more frequently questioning the sanity of my own mind, and persuading myself that I had either seen a phantom of Edward Hamilton, or one of those extraordinary resemblances of which I had often

read and heard, without however admitting the accuracy of the report with regard to the minute truth of likeness. The whole world contained for me but one idea, one image. Every letter I opened was to bring me tidings of him; every noise I heard was the approach of himself. If I walked out, and an unexpected sound startled me, I turned round, expecting to see him before me: it had perhaps been occasioned by a withered leaf blown by the wind along the gravel. If I remained in the house, and heard a carriage approaching, I ran to some window to catch the first glimpse of his figure—it was the Mrs. Dalrymples or Mrs. Baldwin.

But on the sixth day, which was to be the last, there came a letter from Mrs. Elphinstone, forwarded from London, which, after expressing some astonishment at not having heard from me, told of Edward Hamilton's arrival in

England and in London ; of a flying visit which he had paid her brother, and of the regret she had felt on hearing that some slight illness confined him at present to his hotel. All that the letter contained was written rather as a comment on things supposed to be known, than under the impression of giving information ; and little did the writer think that the very sentence which ought to have given me pain, would be to me a reprieve from despair. I knew not the nature of the illness she alluded to ; I made no pause to conjecture what it might be ; I only permitted myself to rejoice that there was a cause, and a sufficient one, for Edward's not having sought an interview with me. The time had been, when the report of any evil having befallen him would have reached only to torment me. But my week of mental pain and anxiety had rendered me insensible to mere bodily suffering, and had perhaps too made me selfish.

I love to trace all the extremity of my folly, to reveal, as far as I am able, the insane workings of my heart. In an hour after the perusal of that letter, I was as perfectly reinstated in happiness; my hope was again as firm as though fear, doubt, and suspicion had never entered my thoughts. I had been too miserable to distress myself causelessly with regard to the nature of Edward's illness, and did not even on its account hasten my return to London by the one day which I had it in my power to do. No; I was happy, and would remain where I was till the next morning, and not betray an infirmity of purpose, or expose myself needlessly to the accusation of caprice. I did remain; and as the hours advanced, my approbation of my own conduct rapidly increased. So surprising an instance of self-government appeared to me at once so admirable and so extraordinary, that I believe I was in some danger of breaking my resolution from the excess of my

self-complacency at having formed it. Henrietta was busily and happily employed; but she every now and then found leisure to remark on the improvement in my looks, and the contrast which I presented to what I had been on every other day since I had come to Eden Grove. I listened to and believed her; and was most sincerely rejoiced that I had not met Edward while doubt weighed upon my spirit: for I could now meet him with a frank and free heart.

Mrs. Elphinstone had mentioned his address, and, the moment I arrived in London, I dispatched a note to him at his hotel, informing him of my arrival in town, of my having heard of his indisposition, and of my anxiety to know how he was. What I wrote was as a sister to a brother, or as a friend to a friend. I told Henrietta calmly and dispassionately, that Mr. Hamilton had returned from the West Indies,

and waited the return of my servant with tolerable patience.

He came:—“ Mr. Hamilton was out—had been out the whole day, but his servant would give him my note the moment he came in.”

Had an ice-bolt been shot through my heart I could not have suffered more pain. A relapse of misery is worse than its first attack. The next day brought Edward Hamilton to my door,—into my presence: I heard his voice,—I saw his form,—I felt the pressure of his hand,—his lip touched mine,—his greeting was affectionate, kind, and touching;—he talked of my mother, and I wept;—he uttered words which he meant to be consolatory, and I wept the more; but no ray of happiness visited my heart. The long looked-for moment had arrived which was to repay me for the devoted love of years; and my prevailing feeling was, that Edward Hamilton had disappointed me. Dull, cold,

and spiritless, I was neither soothed nor gladdened. He apologized for not having made his first visit to me, and talked of important and troublesome business; but I fancied that he blushed while stringing his excuses together. He felt, I thought, that there ought not to have existed any occasion for apologies. There was indeed some awkwardness and embarrassment on both sides, and I felt as if my manner was cold, and considered as such. I have seen a burning brand, while glowing with intense heat, if suddenly exposed to a stream of cold air, change to an ashy whiteness without, long before the fire within can be extinguished. It may serve, I think, as a faithful image of my own heart on that to me most memorable day.

I do not think my love was lessened, but that pride, deep pride, influenced my conduct, and for a time usurped the dominion of every other feeling. When he left me, I watched him as

far as my eye could reach, and my anger for one instant gave way to tenderness ; but for the first time in my life I thought of his obligations to my mother. With ingenious self-deception I then endeavoured to ascribe my disappointment to the slight which I conceived had been paid to her. The wounded feelings of love concealed themselves under a covering of filial tenderness ; and I said, “ He ought,—yes, he ought to have made me his first consideration, as the daughter of my mother.”

CHAPTER XXIX.

HENRIETTA had been absent during his visit, and returned shortly after his departure. Mrs. Gordon, the sister of Colonel Forbes, at whose house I had first seen Edward Hamilton after his last return from Jamaica, had taken her early to see sights and wonders. But all she had seen and heard seemed to have made no impression in comparison to the one fact revealed to her by Mrs. Gordon's brother, who had been of their party,—that Mr. Hamilton was in London,—that, the very night of his arrival, he had been dragged per force to the concert, where he had done nothing but gaze on us both, before

and after he knew who we were. “And, do you know, Constance? he told Mr. Gordon that you were so altered, he could scarcely believe you to be Miss Forrester.”

A great many of Henrietta’s remarks escaped me, and it had now become necessary that I should in my turn tell her of Mr. Hamilton’s visit. She was evidently pleased, and asked with more eagerness than usually marked her manner, when I thought he would come again. There was a flutter and elation of spirits about her, that was almost unpleasant to me ; and her perpetual recurrence to what Mr. Gordon had said of Mr. Hamilton, and what Mr. Hamilton had said of us, made me suspect that it had been coupled with some compliments to herself, which she dwelt on with peculiar pleasure, but had not courage to repeat. At length I asked if nothing prettier had been said of either of us than she had yet

told me. My answer was a very deep blush, accompanied by a rich and happy smile.

“Come, Henrietta, something has pleased you greatly: tell me, did Captain Gordon say you were the prettiest girl in London?”

“Oh! Constance, if I tell you, you will laugh at me; but you are laughing already, so I will. Yet I dare say it was all Captain Gordon’s invention, though he assured me, on the word of a sailor, it was not: he said then that Mr. Hamilton declared he had never seen so beautiful a creature, and that if he did not remember my being born, he should think I was an angel.”

“Ah! Henrietta, that is indeed saying a great deal. Mr. Hamilton is worse off than Lovelace in “Clarissa Harlowe,” for he had only a report of her birth, and might persuade himself occasionally that it was a mistake:—but, come! as we are to dine with Mrs. Gordon,

and go to the Opera, do you plume your wings, while I, as a mere mortal woman, try to make the best of myself."

I was glad to be alone. Was I indeed then so lamentably changed? Had I, in reality, survived all personal attraction! Was *I* no longer young? Could the bright wreath of youth have fallen from my brow and I have not perceived it? Impossible! But, even if it had, were youth and hope not only twin-born, but so inseparably united, that they must necessarily die together? No, no! To Edward Hamilton's memory I must at least be still young; ay, perhaps more; and he, had he not also grown older; and did he not despise mere beauty? If mine had perished, had it not fallen a sacrifice to my love for him—to my ceaseless anxiety—my unsleeping affection? Would he not, must he not, esteem me the more for that steadiness of regard which

has surpassed the ordinary love of woman? Would he not be grateful, beyond the ordinary gratitude of man, when I should reveal to him the passion of my life? How it had first sprung in my bosom, and been fostered by words and deeds, till it had bound me as a chain to his destiny—would he not bless, link after link, the memory of my mother, the friendship of Mrs. Elphinstone, and thank me with his entire soul, for the prayers I had breathed, the tears I had shed, and for every fear which had given me pain? For, oh! had he not associated my name with the home of his heart;—had he not recently said, “England and Constance Forrester?”

And as thus question after question arose in my mind, and as the past came back, not as the past, but as a reflex of the future wherein the same enjoyments were to be traced which the past had afforded, I forgot my recent disap-

pointment, and, with a lighter heart than I had known that day, began to attire for the evening. But, as I did so, the reflection of my own form met my eye so changed, that I could scarcely resolve on exposing it to the gaze of others. My complexion was pale and inanimate as marble, and my sunk eyes shone with unnatural lustre; my long black hair, still luxuriant, and my mourning-dress, heightened the wanness of my death-like appearance. I shuddered at the contemplation of myself. For a moment the thought of artificial bloom crossed my mind; but I rapidly banished it with a feeling of indignant self-reproach. In this moment of humiliation Henrietta came to my door, and inquired if we should not be late? Simply and elegantly dressed, full of that charming expectation which the love of novelty inspires, her sweet and youthful smile a little tempered by her anxiety lest we should lose

any of the coming pleasure, she looked and moved like a being of superior order watching over the interests of mortals.

A month before and I should have gazed on, admired, and felt proud of that beauty. But now that it presented so cruel, so painful a contrast to myself, I turned from it in despair, and almost in disgust. She left me, and I fell upon my knees. Could I be sunk so low, that the sister whom I had loved so dearly, so truly, should, from her very perfections, become hateful to me? Could it be possible, that in the innermost folds of my heart, there lurked the secret seeds of envy? Oh! if there did, might they be rooted out, though my life-blood flowed with them! O most merciful Creator! I said, let me but act worthily, justly, and generously if needful, by this most innocent and amiable being; and whatever may be my own destiny, I ask no more. Different

as we are, did not one mother bear us? Oh! let not grief for the outward covering consume or tarnish the soul within. Great and good God! of thy everlasting kindness, take me to Thyself, ere Thou suffer my strength to fail, or my feet to fall!

My soul was full of anguish; indefinite terrors oppressed me; I knew not what I feared or what I hoped, but my prayer was as clear and distinct as it was pure and fervent: I had been tost in tempest, deceived, not comforted, by my own beguilings; but as I drew near that Being who can alone save and aid us, though but for a brief and passing moment, the dross of earth and earth-born selfishness fell from my wishes, as the shades of night disperse before the rays of the morning. O that I had then, and from that hour, devoted myself by penitence and prayer to him alone!

I would gladly have passed that evening in

solitude; still the consciousness that I felt a desire to continue unseen, from mere personal motives alone, made me overcome my repugnance. I felt, however, as if in so doing I was bursting the cords of vanity that would have restrained me. My mind was, in truth, over-wrought, or I should not have made the attempt. But moral peril, like personal danger, by over-excitement, intoxicates the brain, and renders the judgment blind or passive.

CHAPTER XXX.

Oh! quanti amanti han vissuto un giorno di troppo!

COLONEL FORBES handed us from our carriage: his quick penetrating glance instantly rested upon me, as if he sought to read my soul. Secret misery, however, is not only sensitive but timid, and I was every moment afraid lest he should make some inquiry, or utter some words of sympathy, compassion, or fear, that would re-awaken the yet trembling chords of sorrow within my bosom. To shelter myself from his scrutiny, I entered into conversation with Mrs. Gordon, and with the appearance of profound attention, drew from her

a repetition of the morning's adventures. While she was detailing them, Mr. Hamilton was announced ; and in a few moments I felt my hand taken, with " Constance, this is an unexpected pleasure." To me it was unexpected pain—I felt as if I could not bear it.

But the flutter of the moment over, and after Captain Gordon had led him to Henrietta, and laughingly told him, it was all an error about her having been born, for that on good authority *he* knew she had been sent direct from Heaven,—he came and talked to me of my sister, and the fulfilment of my predictions and the failures of his. And such was the magic of his voice,—so deep was his influence over me, that I not only regained composure, but my heart was raised to gaiety.

I gained courage to tell him that I had heard of his having seen and not known me. He confessed it, and avowed, that though I had

never ceased for one moment to exist in his imagination, he believed he should not have recognised me. He thought me ill. "Was I ill?"

"No, but I have had some trials of late." And the nature of my answer served as an excuse for the emotion that seemed rising to betray me. I could feel my before pale, cold, cheek burn as coals of fire. And when he told me I had lived in his imagination, I had difficulty in not replying—"It is well said—the imagination,ameleon-like, takes all hues: the heart alone retains its first and best impressions." Yet I feel that I can scarcely do justice to the extreme kindness and even tenderness of his manner. On the plea of illness and important business, he cleared up to my perfect satisfaction his having been a week in London without seeing me, sceptical as I had been on the subject in the morning. Now, he said, he

was free as the wind, and as idle too, and hoped to visit us frequently.

All this was the language of intimate friendship, the revival of familiarity between brother and sister long parted—but it was not love. It was not such a meeting as I had imaged, and hoped for, and put faith in. I could trace no interval between the full expansion of my best and brightest hopes and their utter failure. I seemed to have been insensibly led to the brink of a precipice, and while in the most perfect security and admiration of the scene before me, to have been suddenly plunged into the abyss beneath, and to have been stunned and stupified by the fall; for this, I think, rather than acute mental sensation, was what I first endured. When alone, it is true, I wept, and pressing my hand against my temples said,—“ Shall I retain my reason ?”—But I do not think that I knew why I said it, or comprehended the

extent of the evil which had befallen me, neither did I in any degree indulge in or give way to grief. I, who had held such frequent communion with sorrow, who had found such frequent consolation in tears, first seemed to have a glimmering,—a faint and imperfect impression, that as long as we can cherish the one, and fly for relief to the other, we are ignorant of real suffering, and are only acquainted with calamity by name. Yet, if a breaking heart can ever date with truth that point of time when its nerves, once powerful in hope, first gave way, I think mine may fix that hour in which all feeling first seemed deadened within me.

Yes, though day after day he came, and, in despite of my fearful and distracting thoughts in his absence, resumed when near me all his former influence; though it became happiness to me—if to any thing so transient, so fugitive;

that term may be applied—but to hear and look upon him; though conviction of his inconstancy (I may not call it falsehood) came so slowly, that the javelin seemed to linger as it flew; though I still said—“ I will hope—yes I *will* hope—yet a little longer; I may and will hope—” Still I think it was in the first and second interviews with him that those wounds were given which reluctantly and gradually afterwards widened for the admission of despair.

It entered slowly, for I had yet a particle of hope—feeble, flickering, varying and dying, but still hope, which to its very last spark, long as it had deceived and misguided me, fed, and cheered, and revived me. I had nursed this hope in silence and solitude, and it seemed unwilling to desert and leave me to tread the waste of life alone.

The London season was now nearly over, and at its expiration we should, in all probability,

be separated for many months. I could not invite him to Eden Grove ; but the bright summer days, or rather the restlessness of my mind, made me long to be there. Anticipated motion, to me was rest. I arranged to go ; and when I announced my intention to Edward Hamilton, he asked if he might come and see me there !—He longed, he said, to retrace the haunts of his childhood.

Few, I think, can be so cold of heart as quite to condemn my having clung to the expectation thrown out thus unexpectedly by himself. It banished every fear,—all other thoughts centered in it alone ; and if a doubt came,—if one misgiving caution crossed my mind, whispering how frequently, how deeply, how similarly I had before been deceived, I silenced it and made peace with myself, by saying, “ It is the last, the very last:—if this fail, I never can, without insanity, hope again !”

It *was* the last,—I clung to it as a drowning wretch to the straw he thinks will save him ; as the condemned criminal to the hope of pardon which is to rescue him from an ignominious death ; as a mother over her dying child clings to the belief that her kiss of love will cool its fevered breath. Weak and feeble as it was, I grasped it with my whole soul's accumulated energies,—dwelt on it as we should never dwell on what is earthly,—trusted it as we should never trust in that which springs only from our own capricious and tyrannical imaginations—and it failed !—Why should I marvel that it did so ?

CHAPTER XXXI.

HE came:—it was almost early morning when he arrived; his Jamaica habits having, he said, taught him how to avoid the noontide heat of a July day in England. How my bounding, anxious heart beat as I listened to this simple assurance!—How quickly I interpreted it into the restless impatience which I thought it natural he should feel. I was sitting alone in the very room where he had made the avowal of his love for me to my mother. He looked around and sighed heavily; I regarded it as a homage to her memory. His eye then rested upon me fixedly, and as if

involuntarily. Alas ! it must have been in pity that he regarded me !—yes, in cold pity ; and this, too, at the moment when I thought the associations of other years were crowding to his memory with a force too great for resistance, too rapid for utterance, but which he would nevertheless hereafter summon as witnesses to the truth of that affection he had now come to reveal.

Pity, they say, is closely allied to love. It is possibly true ; but never more may love like mine meet with pity for its reward ! The look of Edward Hamilton which expressed it, is among my most mournful recollections.

We had been above an hour together, when Henrietta, unconscious that I had any visitor with me, ran hastily into the room, exclaiming, “ Constance, Constance, I have found your dog ! ” Bran had been missing in the morning, and Henrietta had undertaken to recover him :

she blushed deeply when she discovered that I was not alone, and the bonnet which she held in her hand was instantly placed on her head. Edward Hamilton, as he led her to a seat, recommended that it should again be taken off, and, apparently without very well knowing what she was about, she obeyed him. Henrietta was a timid girl; and in one so beautiful, timidity argued such perfect unconsciousness of the impression she was making, that it became a heightening grace. The day she had spoken of Edward Hamilton's admiration was the only instance she had ever betrayed of personal vanity. In general, the society of persons to whom she was not accustomed was painful to her, and she appeared to me to be only saved from awkwardness by the natural gentleness of her manner. On this day her embarrassment seemed longer than usual in wearing away, probably because there was nothing at

first to share our attention or divert it from herself. There was sometimes an oppressive-ness about her, when she found herself looked at, that reminded me of Collins' description of Fear, who

———— back recoil'd, he knew not why,
Scared at the sound himself had made.

I could speak and think of all this,—but how much was there in her gentle heart, beneath that timid demeanour which I had never sounded!

This day, Bran, after a brief lapse of time, came to her relief: it was the first time Edward had seen his dog, and the recognition and remarks on his advance in years, (for life was becoming a burden to poor Bran), had given Henrietta time to recover herself. But, as soon as Edward and I were occupied in talking, she stole away and we were again left to ourselves.

Edward continued his lamentations over

Bran till he degenerated into some commonplace remarks on the evil of growing older. I had felt them, for he had made me feel them; but, as he talked, I threw in arguments on the other side of the question, and, more in earnest than in jest, asked if he indeed considered youth and beauty the only valuable possessions? At the moment I asked the question, when I pretended most to despise them, I think I would have given worlds to have recovered the one, or purchased the other. No wonder then that his reply should give me pain!

“Why, in truth, Constance, I think there is little else worth living for. I not only say with Romeo, ‘Can philosophy make a Juliet?’ but can wisdom, can riches, can accomplishments, can *any thing*, make a Henrietta?”

“Do you love Henrietta, then, Edward?”

I know not what possessed me to make such an inquiry. An instant before, and nothing

could be farther from my thoughts than a suspicion of its possibility.

“ I love Henrietta ! How can you, Constance, suppose me capable of such madness—such folly !—Why, I am nearly old enough to be her father.”

I did not press the subject, but said,—“ I hope you will dine with us.”

“ Oh, yes ; I mean to remain with you till to-morrow, if you will permit me.”

Permit him : he knew not what he asked. No, I acquit him there : he could not know how severe a penalty he was now inflicting on me by his presence. I felt as if to go from him, never more to see his face, or hear his voice, or have his name pronounced in my presence, could alone give me even temporary calm. Think what must have been my anguish, when I could say from my inmost soul—
“ *Oh ! that he had died !*”

In the course of the evening we wandered through the grounds, and, with my arm resting on his, paused together over many a spot formerly dear to us both. He spoke little: his mind, I was convinced, was not wholly forgetful; but there was no consolation in the reflection. On our return to the house, he asked for music: I said, "Henrietta will play." And she succeeded better than usual in a simple air upon the harp. Her performance was by no means entitled to any thing like rapturous encomium, yet Edward Hamilton praised it, as if it had been something wonderful, and appealed to me if it were not the most delightful air I had ever heard, and the most beautifully and touchingly played. It was repeated again and again; and Henrietta, for the first time in her life, felt confidence in herself from the gratification of success.

He looked over her music, and placed one

piece after another before her ; she continued to entertain him, without farther entreaty, until he brought Hayden's canzonets.

“ I cannot play those,” she said ; “ but Constance can.”

“ Oh ! yes ; I know she can.—Will you oblige me, Constance ?—fond as I am of them, I have never heard them since I left England.”

Performance seemed easier to me than refusal : I took my seat in silence, but the agitation of my mind extended to my fingers. I had no music I loved so much,—none perhaps that I played so well ; but now the notes seemed indistinct before me, and the keys stiff beneath my touch. I struck chord after chord, and prelude after prelude, till at length Henrietta said :—

“ Why do you not begin ?” And I, in reply, asked which they would have. Edward turned over the leaves at random, and said, “ Fidelity.” It was the one he had formerly loved best,

and which I had played the most frequently. I made a violent effort to overcome the feelings that were stealing over me. The first failed; I made one other, and succeeded in playing and singing it to the end.

“Once more — once more !” exclaimed Edward — and I sang it again : but when I ceased, I bent my head over the instrument, and tears of bitterness came to my relief. I sobbed aloud as I shed them. It was but for a moment : I arose from my seat, and, turning round, addressed myself to Edward by saying —

“Forgive me — that canzonette was my mother’s favourite.” — Yes, my dear mother ! for once I feigned an affection for you which I did not feel. What I spoke was truth ; but I knew, when I uttered it, that it was not for you I wept.

Edward’s eyes were bent upon me : a sudden thought seemed to cross his mind : they flashed

like light as he darted towards me, and seizing both my hands, exclaimed, "Constance! tell me, did your mother ever mention my name to you?"

"Never, Edward, but with the tenderest regard."

His impassioned movement and manner had restored me instantly to tranquillity and self-possession. The command of my own destiny seemed to be put into my own hands—but to what end?—He had ceased to love me, and it would have been easier to me to have died, than, by a revelation of facts, to have forced upon his memory even the remembrance that he had once done so.

Henrietta, ever gentle, ever amiable, came and kissed me; and as she did so, Edward's eyes overflowed with tears: he grasped a hand of each, and seated himself between us. He looked at me in silence and in pity;—yes, I am

sure it was in pity ; and as he did so, I thought my heart would break. The sharp and bitter feeling which had entered my mind in the course of the morning, approaching to resentment, had totally disappeared. If I could have spoken, if confused and mingled sensations could have settled into one distinct wish, it would have now been, “ May he be happy ! ”

But there are moments when the mind, though filled with images, has no distinct perceptions. No wonder that they cannot be uttered ; they refuse even to take the shape of thoughts. We had been all too much agitated to remain happily together, and we soon after parted for the night.

Henrietta asked to sleep with me, because she was sure I was ill or miserable, and that I should otherwise pass the night in tears. But I denied her request, and soothed her, and sent her

from me. I cannot undertake to reveal what I endured, when thus left alone to my own agonizing reflections;—but I can at least say what I did. On my knees I exclaimed: “Mother, dearest mother!” And, oh! how I strove to pray and could not! To weep, and no tears came!

In the anguish of my heart I had assumed the posture of supplication; but my lips essayed in vain, even to articulate some oft-repeated prayer. It seemed to me that God would not thus be sought; and that if we would find Him a very help in time of trouble, we must seek Him in serenity and peace, not in turbulence and passion. Then did my head sink on my bosom, and a painful vacuity become the only sensation of which I was sensible, so that if I had been asked in those moments why I was sorrowful, I should have replied: “I do not know,” or, laying my hand upon my

heart, should have added : “ Because there is nothing here.”

“ Was I indeed,” I asked, “ abandoned by Heaven as well as deserted and despised upon earth?—Was there no comfort, none?—Must I die unblessed as well as unloved?”—Would no one listen to the cry of the wretched? no one bend to me with an ear, or an eye of pity?”

Sunk and miserable creature that I was to ask it ! The poison had been of my own administering, and part of my punishment seemed to be, that I must bear the effects of it alone.

I stood at my open window, and the cool air of midnight for a while refreshed my burning brow. There was a nightingale singing in the woods, whose notes I could distinctly hear. I do not think I listened to them ; but when they ceased, I started as from a reverie ; as I have seen children, when apparently in profound

slumber, start, if the song that has lulled them has been suddenly hushed.

An indefinite wish to flee away possessed me. I cared not whither, so that I were but away. Any where else I might perhaps be at rest ; here, never. I, that had repeated a million times, "The mind is its own place, it can make a Heaven of hell, a hell of Heaven,"—forgot in that hour that I must take mine with me, and that all places are alike unto the wretched. The moon had risen,—a young, bright, summer moon smiled over the landscape. I could see its reflection in the waters, and the leaves of the trees grow silvery in its rays. I gazed on the calm beauty of the scene, till my heart was touched, and there came unto it a momentary gift of prayer. I threw myself once more upon my knees. The power of weeping was no longer denied me ; but remembrance ceases here. Exhausted nature

sank into repose, and I could only judge by the traces of my tears that I had wept long and abundantly.

The voice of Helen at my door awoke me. "Miss Forrester, it is very late. Miss Henrietta and Mr. Hamilton have been up and waiting for you more than an hour."

Whoever has known any degree of misery, must unfailingly remember the acute anguish of their first waking hour, when the faint and imperfect recollection of some misfortune, not at first clearly defined, gradually expands into a distinct perception of the nature of the evil,—into a perfect sense of how weak and miserable we are. I started from the unusual position in which I had slept, and hastily answered, "I am coming, Helen."

But, as the confusion of recollection subsided, I threw myself upon my bed, and wished again for sleep, and that it might be the sleep

of death. My whole apartment seemed full of light ; its glare was painful and oppressive to me. I shut my eyes, but could not shut it out. " No," I said ; " it is in vain : the miserable may not hope to exclude any thing that gives them pain."

At this moment the voice of Henrietta beneath my windows met my ear.

" That is Constance's room. Shall I call her ?" And Edward Hamilton's reply, " Not yet. Let us first take a turn in that shady walk leading to the river."

I arose. I could hear the blithe and cheerful tones of their conversation long after I had ceased to distinguish their words, and ventured to look on them for an instant. There was gladness and happiness in the appearance of both. In beauty, in feeling, they seemed perfectly to accord with the loveliness of the morning and of the scene ; while I, in the gloomy reflection

of my own thoughts, seemed to be but as a blot upon the face of creation.

There was however no time for the indulgence of grief or comparison; I felt that what remained for me to do would soon be over; and that I had borne too much, not to go on to the end. I even smiled as I thought how trivial every thing would and must hereafter appear to me.

With Helen's assistance I was soon attired, and had reached the breakfast-room before the return of Edward and Henrietta; and, in order to disarm inquiry, I strolled out to meet them.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THEY both came forward to welcome me, and apparently with one accord placed me between them. I pleaded guilty to the charge of indolence, and strengthened the raillery of either with my own. I joined in every remark of pleasantry or stroke of merriment, and once or twice I observed that my laugh was the loudest of the three. In subduing my will, which would have inclined me to tears and solitude, I seemed to have subdued my reason also, and to have fallen into the contrary extreme. I had never seen Henrietta so gay; but my gaiety

far surpassed her's, yet beside it, it was as false and glittering stones to real and valuable gems—the artificial flower wrought by the hand of man, to the simple and blooming rose of the garden.

My mind had taken a lofty but unnatural tone, and, like a bow too tightly strung, was in danger every moment of relaxing or suddenly breaking.

I not only felt equal to any sacrifice, but longed for some opportunity of proving my strength. I alternately looked at Edward and Henrietta; and if the eyes of either were casually bent on the other, I wished that some sentence might be spoken to pave the way for the heroic words which I meant to utter. As I did so, there was a busy demon at the bottom of my heart that whispered, “There needs but this to render your misery complete;” and in the recklessness of my soul, I

listened to and wished to obey it. Once, indeed, I approached Edward Hamilton, with the wild intention of taxing him with loving my sister, and placing her hand in his. When I formed it, my imagination was dazzled by its grandeur and magnanimity. In the pride of my heart, I said it would be worthy of myself; but as I advanced to do so, I glanced at Henrietta, and the unclouded innocence of her brow, the gay and happy expression of her features, recalled me to better thoughts: I felt I had no right to compromise either her dignity or her affections; and I was penetrated with shame as I reflected that I had been on the verge of doing both. In moments of great excitement, my memory has often leagued with my imagination to give me additional pain. In this instance I appeared to myself to resemble the Druids, who, when they had not culprits sufficient to fill the huge figures of wicker-work in which they

were wont to destroy them, thrust in the innocent to complete the sacrifice. Five minutes before, I had contemplated myself as a heroine equal to any exertion of mind,—any renunciation even of the heart; now, I beheld myself as a weak, thoughtless, and selfish being, unequal to generosity of purpose, incapable of prudence of thought. The false and unnatural elevation of my spirits was over, and I actually trembled lest I should, either by word or deed, betray my real condition.

Edward Hamilton was busied in turning over some prints, and, that I might the better conceal my agitation, I made some observations on them, and on some new publications which lay near him. He gave me hurried answers, and at length put an end to the subject by saying he had sadly neglected *those things*.

And this was Edward Hamilton!—But, at the time, I made no such comment: I merely

sought to keep his attention occupied, that it might not rest on me. I asked him if he would like to walk ; but, after inquiring the hour, he said he was to dine that day at the Clarendon with his friend Gordon, and must therefore depart. I thought Henrietta looked at me as if she considered I ought to ask him to stay ; but I merely said, “ Must you go ? ”

His horse was soon brought to the door ; and on taking leave of us he kissed me, but only shook Henrietta by the hand. I marked the difference, and the second “ Good b’ye, Edward,” which had risen to my lips, died on them. Yet, I watched him as long as I could discern his figure in the distance,—as long as I could even imagine that the trampling of his horse’s hoofs could by any possibility reach my ear. But when the utmost stretch of fancy could no longer delude me, I turned away — “ And now to the heavy task of rooting out his image

from my heart !” were the words I pronounced as I entered my own apartment. They sounded like reason, but they were spoken in madness ; for, what short of madness could have given faith to any thing so vast and so impossible ?

Yet I added—“ I will think for *ever* of him no more,—hear of him no more,—speak to, look at him no more :—the Edward Hamilton that loves me not, cannot be the Edward Hamilton I have loved ;”—and in passion, fierce, and desperate, I dashed his likeness to the ground, and stamped on it with my foot ! Oh ! the living anguish that I suffered when I saw those features on which I had gazed with such fervid, fond affection, through so many years, defaced by my act of violence ! The complete, the over-mastering shame which I experienced when, throwing myself on the ground beside it !—I wept and sobbed over my own disgrace — my own changed character — more

than over my blighted prospects and blasted affections. My every joint shook, and every fibre trembled. Did this transport come to my soul to prove to me that I was attempting what I had not power to perform? — to remind me that my love lay as deep or deeper than ever?—that by my own unassisted exertions I could never root it out, or stifle its growth?—Now I can think this, but then I was only alive to the bitterness, the heaviness of the punishment which I had brought upon myself by my own deed — the horror, the secret horror, of reflecting that my own rash hand had destroyed the only possession that could have soothed and softened the hours to come! Shame! shame on my wayward and variable heart!—that, which in perfect and faultless beauty I had despised and dashed to the earth—defaced and disfigured I pressed to my bosom, and vowed we would at least now, never, never

part ! I pressed it to my lips : the kisses which, in confiding, happy love, I had almost shrunk from bestowing, now in misery, in self-condemnation and repentance, I gave unblushingly and without fear ! Yes ! it had come to this : I was fallen—debased in my own eyes, till I could love on without requital ; and instead of combating, foster and encourage it, and consider it but a proper penalty for the unbridled anger I had indulged in, the frenzied outrage I had committed.

How my weak hands trembled as I clasped the shattered frame of the image I had so madly, fondly cherished, and with what child-like violence I wept ! As if tears could wash out the remembrance from my own mind of what I had done, or recall the traces of that beauty which I had so loved to look upon, and yet had so wantonly destroyed ! But though my tears fell as abundantly as those of

childhood, they had all the bitterness of such as come,—not to the relief, but—to the reproach of maturer years. Mine fell, and I was left un-comforted. Yet, for a time, all sorrow, all regret for the past, all dread of the future, was concentrated into a solitary, deep, and remorseful feeling for the one act of the last hour, as though it stood alone in the history of my life, utterly unconnected with all that had already gone before, or that was yet to come. The tears which flow from the pain of guilt, and not from penitence, can bring no balm; they have no healing power; and though we wake but to mourn, or mingle our drink with weeping, as long as they thus flow they will bring neither succour nor consolation. I could well testify of this—but I will let my story speak it for me, and continue.

I had a dread of again meeting Henrietta. The idea of exposure to an assembled multitude

would have been less terrific to me than that that good and gentle girl should penetrate one of my thoughts which she could condemn. I had been, I well knew, not only loved, but looked up to, by her. She had regarded me as a model beyond her reach, whose conduct she might humbly imitate, but never hope to equal. There was a species of blind idolatry in her opinion of and affection for me, which had gratified me too much for me to seek to dislodge it; and I now felt, certainly not without reason, that, associated as I had been with her ideas of virtue and excellence, to appear to her as I was, might be a shock and injury to her mind. To those who have taken high ground, to feel that they are descending when they hoped only to rise, must be in itself sufficient heaviness and anguish; but it is as nothing compared to that deeper humiliation, of failing in the eyes of the young and pure in heart,

whose tender thoughts you have taken pains to guide, and fix in unalterable habits of goodness. The wish, however, of getting rid of Henrietta was founded also on my conscious incapability of enduring restraint.

When we met, there were faint traces of tears upon her cheeks; and she explained so fully how she had been employed, and where she had been, that I found *she* was apologizing to *me* for her absence. This saved me an infinity of trouble, and I began seriously to consider how I could dispose of her. I was indebted to Lady Harvey for extricating me from this difficulty. Report, public and private, had reached her of Henrietta's beauty, and the admiration she had excited, and she now wrote to petition me, as we were out of London, to let her go to her for a few weeks. The letter was plausible and smooth, and, like Lady Harvey, expressing the tenderest affection for Henrietta, and re-

gretting that my extreme dislike to Bath excluded all hope of my accompanying her; and this regret was expressed so clearly, that it would have been quite impossible, had I been in the greatest degree inclined to do so, to have accepted the invitation. A stranger to have read it, would have pronounced her the most amiable and ill-used of mothers, and me the worst of daughters.

My consent was immediately obtained, and I arranged to accompany her myself, in the following week, within two stages of Bath, if I could hear of no one with whom to entrust her. Henrietta thanked me, and appeared delighted; I wished to lose her; to be alone seemed necessary to me; but I could not bear that she should be glad to go. It made me querulous and unhappy: I thought it ungrateful; and when she expressed a wish that I would go with her, or offered, as she sometimes did, to remain with me, because she

really perceived I was ill, I considered her insincere ; and had not this brief interval of time been unexpectedly shortened, I should, I fear, have betrayed myself and afflicted her.

Colonel Forbes came to inform us that his sister was going to Clifton, and in her name, as she would pass through Bath, to offer her services. I availed myself of the opportunity, and on the following day, Mrs. Gordon came for Henrietta. As the moment of her departure drew near, her spirits began to flag, and she said repeatedly, “ I wish I was not going from you, dear Constance,” and as frequently wept as she repeated it. Yet, when Mrs. Gordon observed on my looks of ill-health, and recommended me to take care of myself, upon Henrietta’s adding, “ I wished to remain with Constance, but she would not let me,” I had the unkindness to say “ Yes, Henrietta has been very kind ; but I am afraid there was more of

Orpah than of Ruth in her offers, for she *does* go, and is glad to go."

I smiled as I said this, and I believe intended it to pass for pleasantry; but Henrietta, who had risen to take leave of me, threw herself again into her chair, and bursting into tears, exclaimed, "Oh, Constance!"

They were the first, the only words of reproach which had ever broken from her to me, and I felt them as if they had been so many daggers. I knew that I deserved them, and, in spite of the presence of Mrs. Gordon, I ran to her: I locked her in my arms; and when I could speak, I said: "Forgive me, dearest. To part with you pains me. I know not what I do; but I have been unjust and unkind; forgive me, Henrietta, and go." I led her to Mrs. Gordon, and added in excuse: "We have not quitted each other for years."

She had the tact to discover that we had

better be left together, and passed on to her carriage. Henrietta clasped my hands, clang to and kissed me ; but she did not speak to me again. Her “ Oh, Constance !” were the last accents I had then or now to dwell on.

I had called myself unkind and unjust,—I had been both. Where, alas ! is the being who, under the dominion of passion, does not become unkind to most, and unjust to all ?

Henrietta had evinced a strength of feeling of which I did not suppose her capable ; and among the questions which I asked of myself, when left alone, were, “ Have I been mistaken ? Can this very gentle, timid creature feel as acutely as rougher spirits ?—can she suffer as much ?” The scene I had witnessed favoured the belief ; still I answered, “ I trust not ;” and strove to drive the subject from my mind.

In this I had no difficulty. I was left to the

solitude which I had coveted and created,—to the unrestrained indulgence of the grief which I loved. There was the stillness of night around me, though the sun was high in the heavens. Except Helen, Bran was the only living thing near me that I regarded ; and in a few days from this time, Bran, who scarcely ever left me, died at my feet. I will not record the degree in which I lamented him. In the deepest wilderness I could scarcely have been more alone. The few families within a visiting distance called, but I saw them not. They sent me invitations, but I refused to accept them ; and they very properly molested me no farther.

That world, which it is sometimes so difficult to renounce, on the first hint, scruples not to cast us away ; and, let our conduct be guided either by whim or misery, if we evince the wish to shake it off, there is no second effort needful to effect it.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ONE only friend would not thus be thrown from me. Colonel Forbes, on the plea of having been my father's friend, continued to come, in despite of denial; and when he found that I steadily persisted in not seeing him, he wrote, and, in the name of broken friendship, first reproached me, and then required an explanation of my inconsistency. I tried to answer these letters, but could not. He came again, and I saw him. For some moments he gazed on me seriously and tenderly: he led me to a seat, sat down beside me, and tears were in his eyes as he said, "What is the matter?"

I was too sensible of his sympathy, to give a distinct reply ; but I attempted to articulate, “ I do not know.”

He rose from his seat, and stood before me. “ Can I serve you ? Is there any thing that I or any other person, can do, to make you happy ?”

“ No.”

“ You are miserable ?”

I gave no answer.

“ And you deny me your confidence ?”

“ I cannot give it.”

“ What, if I were to claim it ? If I were to tell you that I deserve it ?”

“ It would make no difference.”

“ If I were to ask it, to implore it for your own sake ?—for your mother’s ?”

Again I did not answer. The stone-like apathy which seemed to have taken possession

of my heart, gave way before the mention of my mother's name, and I wept.

Colonel Forbes took my hand,—he looked on me, as I thought, benignantly and kindly. I felt as an erring daughter in the presence of an offended but indulgent father. I did not attempt to withdraw my hand. I looked up to him, as if to procure by my looks, that pity and forgiveness for which I could not ask. I knew not indeed why, but I had that tremulous sensitiveness about me, so utterly inconsistent with reason, which equally dreads condemnation or kindness, and can no more bear unmerited censure from the meanest and the worst, than deserved reproach from the wisest and the best. My sins had been against myself. Colonel Forbes, I knew, could have nothing against me; yet now, before him, I felt as a culprit who has some undiscovered guilt lodged in his bosom. He again began:

“ You weep, my dear Miss Forrester ! Why are you thus alone ? Why is Henrietta not with you ? ”

“ Because I wish to be alone.”

“ And have you no friend you could summon to be with you,—to watch over you,—to take care of you, now you so greatly need it ? ”

“ None.”

That one word, so full of desolation, I pronounced calmly and forcibly ; but there was a tightness as of a cord around my heart, when I said it, and I involuntarily started from my seat and moved towards an open window, as if instinctively guided to seek that relief which I so much required. I almost gasped for breath as I attempted to add : “ I beseech you to leave me.”

But I could not speak ; and as I stood, I endeavoured to recover my self-possession, and to

banish self-engrossing thoughts. If the power had been mine, sufficient time was granted me, for many minutes appeared to elapse before Colonel Forbes again addressed me. He in the mean time, as I afterwards remembered, by the rapidity and inequality of his movements as he paced the room, by his quivering lip and unsettled eye, betrayed many symptoms of deep and powerful agitation. I thought it was for me he felt; and while my heart silently thanked him, I began to meditate how I could efface from his mind the painful impression which my appearance and manner had made.

But he approached me, and by the words he uttered gave a very different direction to my thoughts. In language rapid, broken, fervent, and impassioned, he poured out to me an avowal of his love, and implored me to give him a right to be near me.

The astonishment which at the time rendered

me incapable of interrupting him, renders it equally impossible for me to give a detailed account of what he uttered : but I could distinguish, blended with those flattering and endearing epithets that affection suggests and its language admits, and which were more unpleasing to me than they were perhaps ever before to woman's ear,—the plea of long, very long attachment,—the painful and persevering silence he had observed, founded on his belief that my affections were engaged—his dread of refusal and losing my friendship and society,—and finally the disparity in our ages,—the contrast of himself as he stood, a weather-beaten soldier who had numbered more than fifty years, with *my youth, and beauty.*

But there I broke from him :—as the words, the jarring words, *youth, beauty*, fell upon my ear, I snatched away my hand, which he had held, and burst into a wild, frightful, and hysterical

laugh. The mockery, the cruel mockery, that it seemed, to apply such terms to me ;—to me, who saw myself as a thing to be scorned, despised and trampled on ;—but I will not attempt to describe what I then was in my own eyes, or how forcibly, and with what deep pain, the being he had conjured up and seemed to worship, struck on my heart in opposition with the image already there. But all grief has its delirium; and in mine, I had wept over departed youth and perished beauty, as though the one had not been perishable, and the other intended to endure.

Now, I thank my God, I too can speak with astonishment, (such as doubtless will be felt by many,) that a creature destined to immortality could so lament what must finally die within the tomb, however long it may resist the attacks of time. Now, too, I can do more justice to the generous kindness, the disinterested offers

of the noble-minded individual before whom I stood, than I could do then; yet, the alarm spread over his features, even then touched me; I could not bear to be the cause of pain; not that I imagined it possible for him or any one to feel as I had felt, to suffer as I had suffered; for who, in severe grief, ever ascribes to another the same power of feeling and of suffering which they possess? But there was a faint similarity in our destinies perceptible to me, that awoke my sympathy, and excited my compassion; and, to give him relief, I laid before him in few words my whole heart's history, my whole life's devotion—"I too have loved!"

Could I have spoken more, and added, "And am not loved again," I should have done so: but more was needless. The whole truth was revealed to him in what I had uttered.

"Can it be?—Is it possible?" were the only words which he seemed to have the power of

pronouncing in reply. "Yet," he added, after a pause, "it was on this suspicion only that I spoke:—on what other could I have dared to hope? But let me be grateful, most grateful, that you consider me not unworthy of your confidence—now I press my suit no farther."

"Now!—oh! never!—never!"

"Then, *never* be it!—If to have it so will make you calm. Oh! Constance Forrester! how you are changed!—yet, you never were so dear to me as at this bitter hour!—Must I give you up?—I cannot; forgive me, but I cannot!"

"Do you wish to render me more wretched? I thought it impossible—but you do. O that you would but leave me!"

"I will—I will:—say only, that I may write to you."

"If you wish it."

"That you will reply to what I write?"

“ If I can.”

“ That you will see me when I come ?”

“ Sometimes.”

“ Enough.” Before I could again speak, he had quitted me ; and when he had done so, it seemed to me as a dream that I had seen him, so quickly did I relapse into the train of thought and feeling which his arrival and presence had disturbed.

Yet the recollection of the words he had spoken, the nobleness of affection he had displayed, crossed my mind at intervals ; and in the analysis which I have since endeavoured to make of feelings which sometimes actuated me on unusual occasions, it appears to me that even I, sunk and depressed as I had been, weaned as I considered I was from the world and all that it contained, was not yet so dead to vanity but that incense offered there could for a passing moment lessen the bitterness of

my reflections, and allay the quick pulsations of my heart.

But this did not last: I was glad to be rescued, though but for an instant, from the heavy oppression which my own sense of inferiority gave birth to. I smiled at the idea of the language of love being spoken to one who had taken so low a place in the scale of creation as I had done, and I believe I thought with some complacency, that my humility had gone too far. This however was all: I gave no consideration to the attachment of Colonel Forbes separated from this view of myself, and once only thought of him in conjunction with Edward Hamilton. "How different!—how very different!" I murmured; but, oh! strange and inexplicable mystery of the human soul, as I did so, the words which I had intended as exaltation to the one and stern justice to the other, even while I repeated them, brought back Ed-

ward Hamilton to my heart, arrayed in the graces of youth, perfect in moral beauty, and towering above all others in mental excellence, and I continued, in bitterness, the meaning of my exclamation altogether changed—"Different!—Yes, different indeed—but who could ever stand a comparison with *him*!"

And this, after daily, hourly efforts to banish him for ever from my remembrance!—to come back to this, after mental struggles which had promised some success!—Oh! surely the worst and most fearful consequence attendant on an ill-fated or misplaced attachment, is the miserable conviction, not only that the heart has lost repose, but that the mind has lost its power.

Mine, alas! was completely changed: I had gained the 'vantage-ground of truth, so highly extolled, so frequently desired, and I wished that I had never known it. To me it was pre-eminence of pain. I beheld nothing from it

but a dreary and rugged prospect. The scene which my vain and flattering hopes, false opinions, and deceitful fancies, had decorated with so much beauty, had become as barren as a sea-beat rock. It was as if the finest scene in nature had been suddenly stripped of its verdure, of the trees that adorned, and the streams that gave it fertility. Nothing remained—nothing ; my mind had sunk to the shrunken thing that the human intellect must become, where the imagination has been unduly cultivated or indulged—and there seemed no remaining interest for it in this life, no resting-place for it upon earth.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

I HAVE in no degree exaggerated the absolute incapacity to exertion, or the worse than supine indifference to enjoyment, into which I had fallen. Letters, the receipt of which had formerly been so pleasurable to me, even when from persons comparatively indifferent, now, from the few I regarded, neither excited my curiosity nor awakened my attention. Many lay before me from Mrs. Elphinstone and Colonel Forbes, with their seals unbroken, or, if opened, unread, or uncomprehended. Even those from Henrietta, sweet and amiable, as I allow them to be, were permitted to arrive

without acknowledgment; without one reflection on the candour of mind, or affectionate disposition which they evinced. When I wrote to her, I expressed the love and anxiety that I really felt for her, without attempting to reply to any thing she had written.

My heart had so long voluntarily dwelt on one only object, that from habit alone, if affection had been utterly extinguished, it would, I think, still have turned towards the same. I was at times ready to inquire if some spirit were not ever near me, to keep this image constantly before me. I have distractedly stretched out my arms and beat the air around me with my hands, to ascertain if I were really alone. In the full light of day, I have done this, as well as in the darkness of the night. But, what that is mad or foolish, weak or wicked, have I not at some moments either done or thought?

My fondness had made me “superstitious to him”—it has made me, as it has made others, “almost forget my prayers to worship him;” and the love which I had fostered so tenderly, changed at length into a demon to betray or to destroy me. For a time it weakened the mysterious association of my soul with its Creator,—overcame alike all duties, earthly and heavenly,—divided me from this world, without uniting me to another. Yet there was a stillness in my sorrow which I thought without example: unfettered as I was by the presence of others, it seemed to me extraordinary that I did not indulge it. For days together, my eyes were more free from tears than those of the happy; for they often weep for others, and sometimes for their own exceeding blessedness. Yet, for whole hours I could sit immoveable with every memorial of Edward Hamilton around me; thus cherishing, though the delusions of hope were

over, every impression that had given them birth, every relic that had kept them alive. Let no one who has become the slave of passion desire uncontrolled liberty of action; better, far better, to be chained to the wills of others, than exposed to the dangers of solitude, and the unrestrained indulgence of our own wilful and erring imaginations. The heart must be duly penetrated with religious hope, before even our own resources are at our command, or beneficence itself can become a consolation. I often felt my freedom an affliction to me, my memory a reproach, and my wealth an ally against me.

“I like to be under restraint,” said a maniac, “for then I can do what I please,”—in the same spirit I sometimes wished to be under control, in order that I might become less accountable in my own eyes.

In what this state of wretchedness would

have ended, had I not been roused to something like exertion,—whether in complete misanthropy, in entire alienation of mind, or mere apathy of heart, it is not material to inquire. It is rational to believe that it could not have long continued what it was; and I can now acknowledge with a grateful, and, I hope, a subdued heart, that the one added drop of bitterness to the cup which I had been made to drink of, was not only serviceable but necessary to me. It was as gall when this was added, but prevented, I think, the whole from being fatal to me.

Lady Harvey, a few weeks after Henrietta had joined her, wrote to inform me that she intended passing part of her autumn at Leamington. It was so very soon after her apology for not inviting me to visit her also, because of my dislike to Bath, that she deemed it necessary to put on some additional armour

of defence; and her epistle was filled with a list of the people at Leamington, to account for the small lodgings she had been obliged to put up with, which alone were vacant, and not even large enough to accommodate her own limited establishment. She regretted this greatly, as she might otherwise have hoped to see me, &c. &c. &c.

I soon set Lady Harvey's mind at rest, by assuring her, that I meant not to quit Eden Grove. And as I smiled over the pettiness, so easily detected, in her little plans and manœuvres, I half envied her her consistency, and wished that I could be as faithful to myself, to my own character, as she had been to her's.

Their arrival at Leamington was soon announced to me; and in one of Henrietta's first letters, this paragraph arrested my attention. "Mr. Hamilton is here," (for with Henrietta

he had always hitherto been *Mr. Hamilton*,) and there followed some few words which had afterwards been carefully erased. I read this whole letter with attention and avidity; but there was nothing farther in it to satisfy either, or furnish food for conjecture, till this concluding sentence.—“ I cannot tell you, my dear Constance, how greatly I wish you were here: if indeed I could, I almost think you would come.”

I however took no notice of this wish when I wrote; and the only effect of the information I had received discoverable to myself was, an impatience for the arrival of letters from *Henrietta*. I experienced, too, a sensation of disappointment when there were none, which I had not thought myself capable of feeling. The laconic sentence of, “ *Mr. Hamilton is here*,” often recurred to me as remarkable and particular; and in the many constructions which I put upon it, I could scarcely fail of sometimes

approaching the truth. The thought of his marrying, and of his marrying Henrietta, often crossed me, and at times I persuaded myself I could bear it, nay that I even wished it; at others, it was the most insufferable torment to me, and I would not believe it possible that so great an additional trial awaited me. The suspense which I was in aroused me to a state of more active but more healthful suffering. I had now something to fear, something to divert me from the past; and I began to busy myself with plans, and to think how I could avert this dreaded evil. What, if I were instantly to fetch Henrietta home? or wait until my consent were asked, and then withhold it? Either scheme was feasible; but with the vacillation of mind that seldom fails to succeed any great excitement, I inclined first to one, and then to the other, till the former was beyond my power, and the latter scarcely left within it.

A very short letter from Henrietta, and a very long one from Lady Harvey, put me in complete possession of the leading facts: they were so characteristic, that, as I read them, I could see the blushes—the tears—the tremours of the one;—the smiles of triumph, importance, and satisfaction of the other;—and I am greatly afraid, that the idea of Lady Harvey's pity and unpleasant elation of tone and spirits, made a deeper impression upon me than the simple and naturally expressed agitation of poor Henrietta's exceeding happiness. Could it indeed be so?—Was it possible, in such a moment, to experience mingled feelings?—to be vulnerable to petty malice and dislike, when such an overwhelming tide of sorrow broke upon me? To act from mixed and corrupt motives, instead of from noble principle and generous affection? I am afraid to ask it; but I will insert the letters, and thereby leave

this point to the decision of others ; or rather I will insert part of Lady Harvey's, who, though in general detesting the task of writing, was on this occasion verbose and diffuse, as though she thought she could never say enough on so fertile and agreeable a subject.

“ You will, I think, be very much surprised at what I have to relate, my dear Miss Forrester ; though, I assure you, I was not in the least surprised, having long expected that it would take place ; and now that it has happened, may say so,—having promoted it to the utmost. At the same time, I must confess, I once thought Mr. Hamilton was attached to *you*, and so I told him yesterday ; but you shall hear. When first we arrived at Leamington, we saw his name among the list of subscribers at the Pump Room, and at Bissett's ; and Henrietta said, she thought it was in the handwriting of the Mr. Hamilton she knew, and I

was tolerably sure it was that of the Mr. Hamilton I had known ; besides, Mrs. Gordon had told me he was to be here. I desired Henrietta, when she inserted our names, to do so in large characters, that they might be seen ; and this I did for the benefit of Mr. Hamilton, as well as of other people ; but, to say the truth, Mrs. Gordon had hinted to me that he very much admired Henrietta, and she very sensibly observed, that if he made her an offer, she ought to accept him, taking into consideration, the immense number of girls, of more than equal fortune with Henrietta, *to be* married, and who, as she said, were really like sharks, ready to catch at the first prey that offered, and the very small number of men who wish to marry. I said nothing of all this to Henrietta, nor of my former suspicion of his having been attached to *you*, for that would make it so very singular ; but I was anxious that he should call on us, and

considered it very fortunate that, having known him years ago, and all his history, I could explain the intimacy which would in all likelihood take place between us, to the satisfaction of any one who might remark it. Still, for days, he came not, and I began to think he had quitted Leamington, when by the greatest good luck we met him in the grounds of Warwick Castle. He was alone, and returned with us, riding by the side of the carriage, and talking to me all the way of former times, and how much he had been surprised at Henry's marriage. And when we arrived at Leamington, I invited him to dine with us; and my maid having learned from his servant that he always went very early to the well, (which was the reason we had never before seen him,) I contrived the next morning to go very early too; and when I found he was there, I told him I had been ordered to rise early by my medical

attendants ; and we all three walked and talked together for some time, till old Lord Tiverton and his sister Lady Anne Courtenay, came ; I then sat down to talk to them, and left Henrietta and Mr. Hamilton to walk by themselves. This was repeated every morning for several weeks ; and as he most frequently breakfasted with us, he was generally included in our arrangements for the day, and two or three times we went again to Warwick, twice to Kenilworth, and once to Stratford-upon-Avon. At length he began to talk of his departure, and I began to be afraid, as he did not come forward with proposals, that I might have been doing Henrietta harm, and keeping other people at a distance ; for she is acknowledged to be by far the prettiest girl here. So, I yesterday attacked Mr. Hamilton on his regard for you, and told him all the particulars of your father's will, and that I supposed he was now going to

propose to you, and I also told him, that if such were his intentions, he had better go away directly, and leave Henrietta, for that he might *find it an awkward circumstance to marry one sister after having won the affections of the other*. He asked me impetuously what I meant; and as I did not think it right to commit Henrietta any *farther*, I told him that I left it to him, as a man of honour, to find out what I meant; yet that the advice I gave him was, to leave Leamington immediately. He said not another word, but went out of the house without even saying “Good morning.” In the evening, however, he came again, and I pretended to have neglected writing to you, and said, I would go and do so, and return in five minutes; I did not, however, return for nearly half an hour; and when I did, (only think, how fortunate it was, Miss Forrester, that I had left them,)—Henrietta was standing by the side of

Mr. Hamilton, her head leaning against his arm ; and as the door opened she darted to the window, and Mr. Hamilton came forward to meet me as I would have retreated, led me to a seat, and told me he was the happiest man in the world. He proposed writing to you to ask your consent, but I offered to do it for him ; he thanked me, and said he would then defer doing so till your approbation was obtained, for that you were so good and so kind, and loved Henrietta so dearly, as she had told him, that he was not as much afraid as he ought to be of being refused.

“ And now, my dear Miss Forrester, pray write directly ; or, if you can come and would be satisfied with your servants being out of the house, I think I could accommodate you at the present moment. Having always felt as a mother towards Henrietta, it is a great satisfaction to me to have been so successful in acting like one.”

Henrietta's letter I have said was brief, and without the aid of Lady Harvey's, would have scarcely been intelligible : it ran thus :—

“MY DEAREST CONSTANCE—you will *not* believe it—oh ! I can scarcely yet believe it myself :— Mr. Hamilton—but Lady Harvey will tell you every thing ; for I know not how to write. Only come to me,—do come to me, my dear, dear Constance, and I will tell you all.”

“Tell you all !”—Poor Henrietta ! when you wrote those words, how far were you from suspecting how much—*too much*—was the little all I already knew.

CHAPTER XXXV.

To talk of tears, is nothing,—to shed them freely and abundantly, is comparatively little,—but to feel in heavy sorrow that the hour for weeping is not yet arrived,—that an interval of time must elapse before you dare indulge in grief, and that, with the first tears you shed, all strength, all resolution must give way—is pain, beyond the power of language to describe. A few came to my eyes as I held in my hand the letters which I have given in the preceding chapter; but they were very few, and I felt that each must or ought to be the last.

I had sometimes wished for such a moment, —to my imagination it had seemed a proper crisis to a destiny like mine :—I had even planned how I would act,—what I would say ; but, in such arrangements, I was to have been the chief agent ;—I had not calculated upon the intervention or design of others, any more than I had contemplated the positive increase of misery which it must prove to me. It had come, and all that I was capable of feeling or of knowing was, that I must act,—that I had to blind the eyes of others ;—and, if I could not deaden, or silence my own heart—feign a happiness I could never feel,—be outwardly calm when inwardly distracted,—seem gentle, kind, and loving, with every traitorous passion up in arms against me. Oh ! how I spurned the thought—to *seem*, and not *to be*,—to constrain my own frank nature to tread in the paths of crookedness and dissimulation ! Could nothing

save or spare me ?” No,—it must be done, and done quickly.

Yet, even with this strong conviction on my mind, I could not write either to Henrietta or Lady Harvey. I read their letters again and again ; and after saying over that of Henrietta, a thousand times, “ Go ?—I cannot go ;” at length ordered my carriage to be in readiness, with the earliest dawn of morning, to convey me to Leamington.

“ To fetch home Miss Henrietta, I hope, Ma’am ?” said Helen.

“ I do not know ; for Miss Henrietta is going to be married, Helen.”

And it is strange, the relief I derived from uttering these few words.

“ Oh, Ma’am ! and who to ?”

“ Mr. Hamilton, Helen.”

“ Mr. Hamilton, Ma’am ! Why I always thought,” she replied in so broad an accent of

astonishment, that I felt I had been imprudent in the communication I had made. And without the addition of "what she had thought," I was left in no doubt that Helen's suspicions had inclined in the same direction as my own hopes. I felt so convinced of this, that I resolved not to take her with me.

This one effort of my strength emboldened me: I found I could speak of this event. Surely then I might write about it, and I instantly addressed a few lines to Colonel Forbes, who had been one of the executors of my father's will, informing him of it, and requesting him to take the necessary steps to secure to Henrietta double the fortune my father had bequeathed to her. I was so much better when I had done this, breathed so much more freely, that had I not been exceedingly desirous of appearing only just, and of steering clear of all that could draw down remark or

admonition, I could willingly in that hour have bestowed on her all that I possessed. I had a kind of instinctive prepossession, that in any degree to exceed moderation, to be what the world could call generous, would go farther to betray me, than perhaps any other thing ; and I forbore the risk.

But when the letter was actually dispatched, and the slight degree of self-satisfaction which I had experienced had worn away, I was left to suffer all the fierce extremes of a rebellious and despairing heart. I could stretch my thoughts over the space of time immediately before me until Henrietta's marriage, and could think of the manifold trials to which I should be exposed in that interval ; but beyond that event there seemed no future for me, except when at times I checked the inclination to weep, by saying : " Then, I shall have time, as well as cause, for weeping."

I wandered out towards the evening. It had been a sultry autumnal day ; and when Helen saw me attired for walking, she hoped I was not going far from the house, because the sky looked still stormy. I for the first time observed that it was so. And as I looked up, I rejoiced in the circumstance ; for while it threatened thunder and rain, and “lightning’s awful power,” there was a stillness, a breathlessness in the air, that looked like a suspension of life, and which you felt could not endure ; and I found in the whole a resemblance to myself—what I then was, and what I should be.

Helen continued her entreaties that I would not go beyond the gravel walk before the windows, for it would certainly soon thunder again.

“ Again !”

“ Oh yes, Ma’am ! did you not hear it ?—the heaviest and loudest we have had this year.”

“ True, true ! I had forgotten.” And I turned from Helen. My task of hypocrisy was begun. I had heard no thunder—knew of no storm ; but was forced, in order to keep up appearances, to utter an indirect falsehood to my own servant.

I went beyond the boundary which Helen had prescribed, and soon found myself by the same birch-tree against which I had been leaning, when I had heard the carriage approach which was to convey Edward from me. I recalled the misery of that hour and all my subsequent unhappiness, till my mother had assured me of his love :—every event of my life passed in review before me, almost every hope of my heart. My senses, that seemed to have been so dead when the thunder-storm was passing, were now acutely and painfully alive. No refined apprehensions of the future, no concentrated view of the past, drew me from the miserable pre-

sent. I sometimes said, "Why did I not die? — Of what value has my life been to myself or others?" — But oftener than either, I said, "Why do I live?"

In the mean time the rain fell in torrents, but it was not till servants approached me with cloaks and umbrellas, that I discovered I was wet to the skin. Their respect of manner reminded me that I had to *fill the part* of the Hon. Miss Forrester. And as the storm abated, I walked on in this consciousness. But nothing can long divert the unhappy from their miseries. There is nothing in ourselves which can do this, not even in those extraneous advantages, which, by raising us in outward appearance above our fellow-creatures, are so flattering to our self-love, that, on this account alone, they would be valued, if they offered no more solid advantages.

The rain had ceased, and a few stars were

visible above the horizon : I looked upon them, and thought that like them I might be gazed on with wonder and envy, and respect—and that like them, even I, might have *veneration but no rest*. No words can indeed convey what at times I experienced in my ardent desire for repose. The feeling was vehement, ungovernable and consuming, and, but that it can only spring from an unsettled and worn-out heart, would in itself be a serious and heavy affliction. The mind in which it dwells can know no rest.

That one night, how peaceful did every thing seem in contrast to myself ! I could see the spire of the village church rise above the ground in which my mother was buried ; but as my thoughts that way tended, it seemed to me that even the grave could not give me the peace and quiet which I desired. I watched and wept, and prayed alternately ; and if that

might be called sleep in which I seemed not for one instant to lose a sense of misery, I also slept—and in the morning took the road for Leamington.

Rapidity of motion had on many former occasions given me temporary happiness, however depressed in spirits; but now, it was wholly ineffectual. If I cast my eye over the landscape, it was not to admire—I no longer sought with almost childish eagerness to distinguish and give a name to objects scarcely discernible in the far-off valleys or the distant mountain top. I could not now watch the curling smoke from some retired hamlet, and let my heart and imagination descend together to happy homes and cheerful bosoms. For me, the earth was “disenchanted”—bereaved of all its lustre and all its beauty. And when night came on, which it did long before my journey was ended, and I raised my eyes

to the heavens, it seemed to me no wonder that man should seek the skies,—at once so bright, so fair, so full of light and splendour,—while the earth is so dark, so void, so full of misery.

The glad voice of Henrietta greeted my arrival; “it is, it *is* Constance.” In one moment she had locked me in her arms,—in another, Edward Hamilton had folded me to *his* heart. Even Lady Harvey kissed me. I had been hoped for, expected, conjectured about, given up, and when I did arrive, I was caressed and welcomed, as if all their hopes of happiness centered in me, and I had voluntarily come to fulfil them. It was a moment of emotion, and of tears to all. Mine therefore passed unnoticed; and as I put Henrietta’s hand into that of Edward Hamilton, they both together murmured, “Dear, kind Constance!”

Lovely as I had always thought her, Henrietta had never before appeared to me so sur-

passingly fair. There was a sensibility spread over her countenance which she had never hitherto possessed. Timid, tremulous when with Edward, she had grown assured and confident in her manner to others. The sentiment that inspired her might be read in her every look, and heard in every gentle tone of her voice. Edward Hamilton, as he gazed on her, looked like a creature raised beyond this world in his hopes and feelings; and the melancholy which I had observed in him, and, long before his return to England, had considered as a part of himself, was no longer discernible. I observed all this; but how I could bear it, how I *did* bear it, is inexplicable, even to myself. I no longer feared betraying what I suffered, which I had before dreaded so extremely. On the contrary, every body seemed so fully occupied with their own thoughts, that when with any of them, even with Lady Harvey

only, I felt perfectly secure from detection. Still, when alone, I had sometimes a horrible feeling, amounting almost to suffocation, as if my grief could no longer be opposed, but that like a torrent, it would come and bear all before it. It often passed away one hour, only to return the next with redoubled violence. My knees have sunk suddenly under me; my hands have been involuntarily raised and clenched while brief tones of misery have escaped me. I became both afraid of and apprehensive for myself.

I can weep as I detail all this; if I did *not*, it were indeed impossible to detail it, for my heart has been long, very long, overcharged; but the tears that now fall freely as summer rain, were then pent up as fountains within me. At the time, I felt this to be so much a reality, that I have sometimes said, "I have surely an accumulation of water upon my heart."

But grief, silent, secret grief, while it often deprives the mind of all active energy, will as often increase its passive power. I can now comprehend, from my own stillness of sorrow, how the martyr, amid acute torments, could remain immoveable as the stake to which he was attached, and partly understand, from my own occasional bursts of painful merriment, the unnatural sallies of mirth in which some human beings have indulged in the midst of agonies and horrors, which seem only calculated to have withered every hope, and even to have repelled every desire to resist.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

IF I had ever doubted the different measurements of time made use of by the miserable and the happy, many opportunities were afforded me, during my stay at Leamington, of deciding the question. My mind, though in subjection and affliction, had arrived at that state which is thought fearful and alarming in prosperity, when there is much to fear and nothing to be wished for,—when many turns of fate might have made me worse off than I was, and none could have rendered me better,—and I acquired all that impatient eagerness for the flight of

time, which such a state of feeling would most naturally occasion. I had before faintly experienced it ; but now, when the striking of a clock announced the hour, while Edward and Henrietta exclaimed—"Can it be possible!—Is it indeed so late?" I often mentally ejaculated "Is it then no later? How *can* I while away the unutterable heaviness of these coming hours which I thought already passed?"

I had but one resource, and, such as it was, it never failed me,—namely, to listen to Lady Harvey's suggestions of what would be most becoming to Henrietta, and where the cheapest purchases could be made, whom to commission, and whom to employ. But when she found that I could not only give orders expeditiously and liberally, but that I meant to be alone answerable for every expense, her economy entirely subsided ; and her expressions, "Lowest in price, and greatest bargain," began to be

exchanged for “the best that could be procured, or most fashionable that could be made.”

I really derived temporary pleasure and relief from giving these orders,—in listening to and adopting her superlatives. I sometimes smiled when I remarked her generosity in disposing, or rather in suggesting the disposal, of what was mine; and when I detected, amid her extreme care in guarding what was her own, her prevailing wish to have the credit of all that was expended, I never opposed her; and she often observed, by way of compliment, that I knew nothing of the value of money.

But I will hasten over these days. To outward appearance, they were only marked by the most unvaried sameness, yet presented to me many varieties of wretchedness. I had sometimes necessarily to listen to Edward, as he detailed his future plans, to give him my

opinion on his place of residence or the extent of his establishment, and often when scarcely knowing what I uttered. I had even to oppose with gratitude and affection the frequent proposal of both, that I would live with them. To hear Henrietta's entreaties first on the subject, and then her gentle reproaches that I would not heed them ; and finally her assurances that she had made it a stipulation with Edward that I should live with them, and that he had never opposed it, though he had expressed much doubt and fear that it might not be perfectly agreeable to me ; I could almost claim merit to myself for the intensity of affection which I at such moments experienced towards Henrietta.

I was so glad still to be loved ; and when she said, as she once did, " Oh, Constance ! what shall I do without you ?" I was tempted for an instant to believe that my presence would be actually necessary to the completion of her happiness.

Edward left us, and I was thus freed from some restraint. He went to London to make the necessary preparations for his marriage, and during his absence wrote as frequently to me as to Henrietta, while his protestations of friendship and esteem for me seemed as inexhaustible as those of his love for her. They were indeed so strongly expressed, so frequently repeated, I was so often his “Dearest Constance”—his “beloved friend”—his “kind, his esteemed sister,” that I once, in wild and bitter agony, exclaimed : “Esteem ! — black hate were better !”

He had in the first instance refused the proposed addition to Henrietta’s fortune ; but had been at length overruled by Colonel Forbes : and nothing now remained to be arranged but the day. I was anxious for an early one, and, at my suggestion, Henrietta appointed the first Thursday in January. It was arranged that Edward should return to Leamington, and

afterwards accompany us to London a few weeks prior to the event. He did so. I was compelled to invite Lady Harvey to go with us, and I also wrote to Colonel Forbes, to request him to act as father to Henrietta. I mentioned what I had done to Edward; and, trivial as it must seem, I cannot forbear recording his well-remembered answer: "Just as you like, Constance! I care not who gives her to me, provided I receive her." And he caught her in his arms when he had said this, and half-devoured her with kisses. As soon as she could release herself from him, she turned to me, and strove to hide her blushing cheek and swimming eyes, by leaning on my bosom. Her very brow was crimson; and Edward, to relieve her from her extreme distress, removed a few paces from us. I could feel her tears, and hear the gentle sob which she vainly strove to stifle; and I whispered: "Do you not then

love him as your own soul?" and she fervently answered, "Better."

I wept for a few moments with her; but, oh! the difference in tears!

Nothing occurred to interrupt our arrangements but a letter from Mr. Leslie, to whom Edward had written, to beg him to perform the ceremony, requesting that if possible the day might be changed to the Tuesday preceding, he having made a previous engagement for the one appointed. There were some messages to the bride elect, and wishes of happiness, accompanied by a due proportion of compliment on charms, virtues, and talents, which were at the time somewhat inexplicable, Mr. Leslie never having seen Henrietta since she was a child. I had a vague suspicion at the time that he had meant them for me, and had some intention of writing to Mrs. Elphinstone, in order that no unpleasant remark might arise.

But when I made the attempt, I found that I had not sufficient force of mind to proclaim at once my own delusion and Edward's inconstancy.

At length the day arrived—the new-married pair were to spend a short time at a country-seat of Mr. Gordon's; Lady Harvey was to continue if she pleased in Harley Street; and I, to go from the church down to Eden Grove. Edward Hamilton had been particularly anxious that the wedding should be private, to the great annoyance of Lady Harvey, who had thrown aside her weeds on the occasion; and, in compensation for this heavy disappointment, the distribution of favours, silver and ribbon, were left solely to her direction. Envidable woman!—how busy, and how happy it rendered her!—Yet, with the exception of herself, never was there, I think, so dismal a bridal, every object seemed to take a solemn colouring from the tone of my own mind.

Colonel Forbes and Mr. Leslie were the only strangers present ; and the latter, after addressing some strange and incomprehensible words to me, said to Edward Hamilton in my hearing, while his eye was resting on Henrietta —“ It will not be very long, I fancy, before I, or some other worthy divine, shall be called upon to perform a similar office for yon pretty trembler.”

I could not resist my inclination to turn towards Edward, to observe if these words made any impression upon him. But he so instantly drew Mr. Leslie on one side and spoke a few words in his ear, that the opportunity was denied me. Yet I could see that he had been agitated, and I once met his eye bent on me inquiringly. His friend spoke to me once or twice ; but surprise or some powerful emotion seemed to have chained his tongue. Colonel Forbes addressed himself occasionally to Hen-

rietta, but otherwise never raised his eyes from the newspaper which he held in his hand, and which he had in the first instance apologized for reading, by declaring that weddings were the most stupid meetings in the world. Lady Harvey had preserved some well-known jests, and gave occasional utterance to them; but most of them fell still-born from her lips, unacknowledged by any laugh but her own.

Our breakfast was more a nominal than a real one, and every body seemed relieved when watches were examined and compared, and it was declared time for the carriages to be ordered to the door. Before stepping into mine, Mr. Leslie approached me, and in a good deal of agitation hoped I would accept of a verbal invitation from his sister, to visit her. I felt, I knew, that he had invented it,—but I feigned to believe him, and replied, as I took his hand, —“Bear my best and most grateful love to her—but I cannot visit her now.”

My heart nearly gave way as I was speaking—but in one more instant I found myself seated by Henrietta, my hands clasped in her's, and her lip upon my cheek, while she murmured a thousand benedictions upon me. Our short drive was soon over—the ceremony itself was soon over—greetings, salutations, and congratulations were soon over. Henrietta wept when she parted from me, and was led to her carriage by Colonel Forbes; and Edward Hamilton, as he led me to mine, said, “It makes me miserable, Constance, that you should be left alone—do change your mind and go with us.”

He paused for my answer—I had indeed considerable difficulty in replying faintly and abruptly, “No—to Eden Grove.”

He lingered to repeat his farewell—to say that Henrietta should write to me—to hope that I would write to them immediately, and to my impatient spirit it appeared as if he would

never leave me. At length the door of my carriage was closed; I drew down the blinds, and as I clasped my hands together and said, "I am alone—I am alone!" my tears burst forth to save my heart from breaking. May few comprehend their bitterness, or the relief they gave me! Yet, *I* have lived to shed bitterer still!

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ARRIVED in my desolate home, I charged Helen to let no one come near me, and, shutting myself up in my own apartment, gave unrestrained indulgence to that grief which in perspective had promised me consolation. I could not now complain that I had no power to weep, but that the exertion of this power, though seemingly necessary to my continuance in life, gave me no comfort,—awakened not one ray of hope,—inspired not, for an instant, the spirit of resignation—that only shelter for a wretch so unhappy as I was; all this, I believed, ought

not to have occupied my thoughts ; for to weep on till the tomb overshadowed me, seemed, as I then imagined, the only right disposal of my life. Grief, I said, is a slow yet sure destroyer ; it *will* do its work, but when ? Would to God that I might forestall that lingering hour without incurring the dreadful responsibility which it involves !

But, even while thus spared, by the mercy of Heaven, from the crime of self-destruction, I shrunk not in contemplation from the moral suicide of withdrawing wholly from the duties of life, retreating alike from its cares, its interests, and affections, and entombing in self, and self alone, all ennobling sensibilities and generous sympathies.

I had in fact already entered on this state of seclusion ; and while I was looking forward to it as something yet to come, an unexpected event proved to me, that isolation had begun its

work in me. At the end of some days, Mrs. Elphinstone, pale and sorrowful, and shedding tears which, I knew, were for me and for my destiny, stood before me. She called me her dear Constance, her poor, betrayed friend; and even implored my forgiveness for her imprudent, her well-meant but imprudent communications; and in the ingratitude of my soul I said,—“Leave me!—oh! leave me!—Labour not to comfort me!—I will *not* be comforted!—I cannot, indeed, bear you to be near me!”

“Leave you!—never, Constance! I have helped to deceive, to mislead you!—deny it not,—*I know I have!* and may God forgive him who first deceived and misled me! but I will not desert you;—wretched girl! you have abandoned yourself, but I will not abandon you!”

Still, I only implored her again and again to quit me. I assured her, and with truth, that it

was not to her I had dislike, but to all things human ; and as my heart softened somewhat towards her, I thanked her, and told her I had once loved her, and should, I doubted not, love her again, and that I would then send for her, or go to her ; but I begged her for the present to leave me to the natural indulgence of my grief, and, in order to give force to my supplications, I quoted my mother's death, and told her it had always been my belief, that, had she been left alone, she might even now have lived.

On this she consented to comply with my request ; and many days had elapsed before I knew that, though she quitted my presence, she still remained in my dwelling.

The moment that I became acquainted with it, was indeed a memorable one. If not a changed, I was a more subdued being. I no longer rejected her presence, — I no longer

said, “ I will *not* be comforted,” but, “ Why did you ever leave me ? ” I clung to her, I knelt to her, I wept. I implored her to shield me, to aid me, to befriend me. But, in vain ! She promised all and every thing I could ask : as my vague requests were granted, I felt how empty,—how useless they were.

I had that morning opened a letter from Henrietta received two days before ; and when I found myself really unable to answer it, I had said—“ Worse than this cannot be,—I must never hear from, never see her more.”—That letter was full of grateful tenderness to me, imploring me most earnestly to write to her, for that *her* happiness, otherwise so perfect, could not be complete, until she heard from or saw me. She was sure, she said, I did not know how sincerely Edward loved me, and that I little suspected how frequently I was the subject of conversation between them.

There was a postscript in Edward's handwriting, to tell me that Henrietta was really unhappy at not having heard from me, and urgently entreating me not to lose one post in writing to her. I did not mark the date of the letter which I had been reading, or I might possibly have had some faint anticipation of the event that occurred. I held it in my hand, and with the feebleness of imbecility or of idiocy, I contemplated the replying to it as a task beyond my power.

I sat down in my own little study,—alas ! it no longer deserved its name—and one by one I took every relic which I possessed of Edward Hamilton, or rather every vestige of my own foolish, fond regard, and spread them before me. Not one was wanting—the miniature, with its broken frame and glass, and rubbed-out colours ; the letters of Edward to Mr. Leslie, which I had received from Mrs. Elphinstone ;

that heart of gold, so long prized by me as an emblem of his own ; his drawings, his letters to my mother, the Sibyl and the Young Girl which he had thought like me—even to the dead heaths—all were there ; and as I surveyed them, I said, “I will destroy them all ! it is criminal to keep them !—Is he not the husband of another ? —And that *other*—is she not my own, my only sister — the child of my mother ?—Oh ! my God ! how wild and wicked have I been to suffer such a marriage to take place !—How can I expiate my errors and my sins ? Alas ! I must renounce her, be self-banished at once from her and from my country !—Yet, if so, may I not take these treasures with me—for I am sure I never can destroy them,—no, I could sooner snap the cords of my own heart ! —I will look upon them for the last time—but I never can destroy them !”

And as I said this, I wept to think how

the dearest and the best had been injured by my own rash hand. And as this transport of grief subsided, another came, mingled with shame that I should still *dare* to be so weak. I arose and paced that narrow room, with wild, unmeasured steps; then knelt and leaned my aching, burning head against the marble pillars of the mantelpiece, to cool it and to give it ease, but the feverish heat went not away: I could feel and almost hear the pulses of my brain beat forcibly against the hard, cold stone, which I had chosen for my pillow, yet their tumult ceased not. And as my dishevelled hair fell around me, I tore it with my hands in bitterness and pain.

But, oh! how suddenly did all this violence give way!—how, in one instant, was my spirit turned to dove-like gentleness and timid fear! My door opened; I turned as I heard the sound, and beheld Edward Hamilton. With instinc-

tive caution I rushed to the table where my collected treasures lay, threw my arms across it, with the vain endeavour of screening them from his view. Well might my distracted movement and unsettled appearance draw his attention to me and to them. He advanced towards me, pronounced my name, raised me gently from the inclined position which I had assumed, and looked fixedly upon me. As he did it, I felt that the sacred secret of my soul was revealed. I trembled as I stood—I strove in vain to speak—some words came to my thoughts, but I could not articulate.

Indistinct exclamations escaped from Edward—and at length I heard him utter, “Forgive me!” The confusion of my mind was too great to admit of my even hearing all he said; but I can well remember that he folded me to his heart, and, that as a gush of tears such as I had never before seen man weep,

escaped him, he said,—“ Yet, but to think how I *did* love you !—Oh, Constance ! why did you deceive me ?—Unhappy girl ! my life must be henceforward more wretched than your own !”

How wonderful !—In spite of that irrevocable destiny which separated us for ever—notwithstanding all I had felt, and suffered, and resolved, as he said, “ *I did* love you !” I thought all my suffering overpaid,—that no future grief could sting me as the past had stung ; and as I closed my streaming eyes and suffered my head to rest upon his bosom, I not only felt a degree of bliss beyond the power of language to describe, but when I could speak murmured,—“ I am happy.”—My acquittal—my justification had, I thought, been just pronounced by himself.

I could hear Edward echo and re-echo the only words that I had spoken ; but by him they

were uttered in tones of desperation mingled with self-upbraidings, and epithets of tenderness and pity applied to his wife and me,—for, in almost the same breath he exclaimed—“ Dear Constance !—Poor, Henrietta !”

At her name I quickly released myself from his hold ; some sudden force of body and of mind seemed imparted to me which enabled me to speak and act. I took his hands in mine—I raised them to my lips—I made a silent appeal to Heaven for strength to execute my purpose ; for to me, though it was the only course to be pursued, it was like signing the death-warrant of all I loved—and, every time I strove to speak, my utterance seemed immediately and inexplicably impeded.—Again I clasped his hands in mine ; I pressed them against my cheek, and my tears flowed over them as I said —“ Bless you, Edward !—bless you!—now we meet no more !”

I can with truth assert, that in the interval which preceded those words, I had made a solemn renunciation of my home and country for ever.—I anticipated no farther evil—but, as I turned from Edward—there stood the afflicted Henrietta—pale as death, trembling with agitation; and as her eye met mine, she exclaimed with a look of wild despair, —“ Oh, Constance !” and turned from me. In vain I cried—“ Come back, Henrietta—come back !”—In vain I made an effort to follow her—in vain implored Edward by signs to do so. He was alarmed for and would not leave me. My senses did not desert me : I could see, and hear, and know, and feel what was passing, what had passed; but I had neither strength to execute what I wished, nor power to say what I desired. The faculties of speech and motion seemed utterly to have forsaken me. While in this painful state, a carriage drove from the house, and

Edward exclaimed, — “ Good heavens ! that must be Henrietta ! ” And I too, when it was too late, could speak,—could say what I had wished, and for an instant upbraid the cruelty of her departure.

“ Unkind—mistaken Henrietta !—from you I have not deserved this ! ”—And while I repeated these and similar expressions in bitter agony, I did not once revert to her distress ; I gave no thought to the impression on her mind, or the fearful change from her height of happiness even to temporary doubt or pain. I was too unhappy to feel for another—the still, small voice of conscience was whispering within, that though the interview with Edward Hamilton had been unavoidable, my conduct in it had been my own—that I had failed to send him from me, or to leave him—that I had listened to the words “ *I did* love you,” with even culpable delight, had suffered them to

dwell like music on my ear, and sink with more than music's power into my heart—that I had even pronounced myself happy to have heard them. Alas ! when do we ever do wrong, and not feel that it was in our own power to have avoided that wrong ? The events which spring from it are beyond our control, and those we call by the name of destiny—it is most true that they are among its most fearful consummations ; but whether they bring on us the bitterness of earthly blame, or excite us to seek more earnestly for the pardon and protection of Heaven, we can never hide the secret of their source from ourselves. But I must resume.

Edward still remained beside me. As I called on the name of Henrietta—for, even while I inwardly reproached myself, I continued to call upon her in the tone and terms of reproach,—he strove to soothe me. But his

agitation seemed equal to my own; and when in a few moments Mrs. Elphinstone came to us, I addressed him and implored him to go, to follow Henrietta, to assure her that I would never see him more, and not suffer her to mistake me. There was a degree of desperation in his voice when he appealed to Mrs. Elphinstone to tell him what he ought to do, that turned the pity which I had felt for myself towards him. But I could not express it. I heard my friend advise him, nay urge him, to leave me. I felt my hand taken by him in silence; yet I neither spoke to, nor looked on him again.

I do not think I experienced any surprise at the unexpected appearance of Mrs. Elphinstone. Powerful emotions leave, it would seem, no room in the soul for such as are inferior; neither did I address her till I knew that Edward had departed. The exact moment was known to me; for, though of late I had become nearly

insensible to external impressions, the sound of the wheels that bore him away grated as distinctly and heavily on my ear as if they had passed over the roof of my chamber.

All was then over,—I had nothing more to fear:—that secret which I had so often trembled lest I should betray, was known to the only two beings from whom it was material to hide it. It signified nothing to me now, that the whole world should know it; in truth, I believe I felt as if they did. One only path was open to me,—to abandon my home and my country for ever. What, indeed, were home and country now to me? The wretched, the forlorn in heart, know not what is meant by either. What could they ever become to me?

As my friend hung over me, and I grew more calm, I asked, “May I not hope for some peace?—a little rest in other scenes?—in some distant spot where the sound of his voice may

never more reach me — where Henrietta can never more look upon me as she *did* look? Oh! do you think she can, that she will do me justice—that she will look upon me as the sacrificed, and not herself?”

She listened to me with patience, with kindness, and her every reply was meant to console me. I felt that it did, in a faint degree, and I now implored her never again to leave me. How readily she gave her promise, and with what stern fidelity has she not abided by it! And, oh! in the midst of my perversity, with what a pure and breathing spirit of religion did she not whisper, “Is there not, my beloved Constance, a strength for the poor and desolate—a shadow from the heat, and a refuge from the storm?”

“I know there is,—and I will *hereafter* seek them in Him who unites them all.”

“Hereafter!—When, dear Constance! could

it be so needful as in this present hour?" and she wept "tears, such as angels weep," at my departure from myself.

Gracious and All-merciful Creator ! If Thy promises were not unconditional, except that we should turn to Thee in sincerity and truth, —if they did not assure us that, from whatever motive, from whatever trial, if penitence be awakened in the heart, it will always find acceptance with Thee, how could I, who disregarded warning after warning, chastening after chastening, now look towards Heaven with thankfulness and hope?

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

I HAD quickly made every necessary arrangement preparatory to leaving England ; — so quickly that I almost persuaded myself I was indifferent whether I ever again heard from or of Edward and Henrietta ; for my mind was of that unfortunate construction, which could industriously seek to deceive itself. It had too, I believe, been weakened by circumstances ; at least, I have now reason to think that it had ; and because truth had been painful, it shrunk from truth. But the deceptions of sorrow are manifold. While I said : “ I wish not to hear

of them—never to see them—duty, virtue forbid it, and I will listen to their dictates in spite of my perverse inclinations”—my heart ached to see them, yet only to tell them how happy I wished them to be,—how happy I would strive to be, if they were so. Nevertheless, I could not go to them; I might be left to my lonely grief; but I must be sought—propriety forbade my obtruding myself before them; and then I wondered that the affection of Henrietta, and the generosity and nobleness of Edward, did not lead them both to me. Each day I proposed commencing that journey which was to remove me too far from them for farther expectancy or disappointment; but I gladly listened to any proposal for delay; and when Mrs. Elphinstone suggested that we should have black dresses for travelling, I consented with the docility of an obedient child, and with an assumed tone of gaiety that almost

spoke the unmeaning elation of one, I added, that I liked her scheme of black dresses, for in me, at least, it would be no hypocrisy to wear them.

When I said this, she shed so many tears ; and, while she struggled against them, betrayed such evident anguish, that I felt astonishment at firmness and fortitude like her's giving way before such idle words of mine. I thought perhaps she disliked the idea of going with me ; and I exhorted her, if this were the case, to give up all such intention. But her answers were too sincerely spoken for me to continue to doubt her willingness, or rather wish, to follow me ; yet, when I looked at her,—when I traced the profound melancholy and excess of thoughtfulness stamped upon her brow, I could not feel perfectly satisfied. It was ungrateful of me to do so ; but I wished again to be alone. For two or three days, all thought of our departure

seemed to have quitted her ; but, at the expiration of that time, her impatience that we should begone greatly surpassed my own. I can now recall all this. Alas ! what she must have suffered !

The black dresses were sent home. I observed that they were mourning, and inquired if they were so by her order. She said they were ; and she paused and seemed at a loss how she should explain, or what she should say, to me. She looked upon me as if she both pitied and feared me. I could neither understand nor endure her gaze. But, as I turned away, a sudden and miserable apprehension took possession of my soul—a feeling, that, wretched as I had thought myself, there was yet a “ lower deep ” of which I had hitherto not dreamed,—a future, compared to which the past and present were ease and happiness ; and in the calm voice of despair I said : “ Jemima, you may tell me any thing ! ”

I felt that something had been hid from me which I must know. At the time I spoke, every sense was in full activity. I can yet see the horror rather than distress which was written upon her countenance. I can yet hear her say : “ Oh, Constance ! call upon your Maker to give you aid !—Henrietta ! ”—But she could say no more ; and there was no need. I fell as one dead before her.

I anticipated what she had to add ; and nature gave way before the intensity of that internal conviction. At the bottom of my heart I seemed to hear the words,—“ is dead ! ” and no human sound was needful to impress it. And even now, lessened as all pain becomes in remembrance, I could sometimes marvel that life itself did not yield before the sharpness of that pang, which brought to my overstrained nerves the relief of temporary insensibility. I may not, I must not repine.

All may be endured, and I have striven to say that I am resigned to live ; but, O that I had never wakened from that brief trance ! that I had never experienced what it was to *find* she was dead, as well as to *know* it.

But I did waken. I did find it. I still find it—in the fresh hour of morning—in the bright noon—in the flowers of the earth—in each thought of my heart—in all that she ever loved or could have enjoyed,—and, worse than all these combined, in the deep, dead night I find it—and prayer can scarcely soothe me back to peace. But, not as then, I can now feel and hope that soon—for *soon*, however protracted, it must be—I may rejoin her in the world beyond the tomb. Then I only remembered that she had ceased to be an inhabitant of this ; that she to whom life might have been as paradise, was in her grave, and that I—I—had sent her there. And the

thought, compounded as it was of bitter associations, preceded as it had been by distressing disappointments and soul-weakening indulgence, drove me to despair—to madness. I ought not to wonder at this—I ought not to shudder as I write it; but when the frailty of that thread is known, on which the balance of our reason hangs,—when it has once been broken, we speak not of madness, as others hear of it.

We tremble to think of it: the uncertainty of the best of blessings has been so pressed upon us, that we doubt the present hour, and dread the coming one, lest we should again stand bereaved. I was indeed bereaved—months, and months, and months, have since passed away; for I have ceased to be an exact reckoner of time; but I make not the awful record without fear. When I think of it I tread softly and gently, and speak in whispers

as though a footfall or a word could bring it back. Yet, I often do think of the passages of my insanity that remain in my mind, and of the last ray of reason that came to it, before my senses failed.

I had entreated incessantly that I might be permitted to behold Henrietta ; long and vainly I entreated. I had an idea that dying she had cursed me, and I believe I hoped that the sight of her would kill me. To banish this error, Mrs. Elphinstone brought me a few words, traced by my sister's own hand only two hours before her death, which she had hitherto been afraid of showing me. Henrietta had written them under the conviction that she could not live to see me again. I give them, for I still read them over, as if my soul could yet drink in comfort from their perusal.

“MY DEAR, DEAR CONSTANCE. If I could tell you now, in this my last hour, that I love

you—how the recollection of all your tender love rushes to my heart—how I feel that for *you* I ought to die—I think—I *know* you would not only pardon me for misjudging you for one single instant—but love me as truly, as fondly as ever ; you would too, I am sure, forgive poor Edward, and love him still. Farewell ! my own dear Constance ! my best beloved sister—my most faithful and affectionate friend ! I do not say to you, forgive and love Edward—for that you must ;—I do not implore you to cherish my memory — *that* I know you will. Dear, dearest Constance, farewell !”

If, before I read these lines, I had desired incessantly and vehemently that I might be permitted to behold the blessed creature who had dictated them, I now still ceaselessly but more piteously and imploringly asked it—and at length I heard a voice advise that my re-

quest should be granted. I did not know who spoke, but I blessed the speaker silently and aloud. And I *did* see her. But it was not that—no, no, it was not that which drove me to madness. It did me good to look upon that face, more fair, more beautiful than it had been in life—to press my lips on that young brow, which could never again feel the sun of heaven—to put my hand against that bosom, and feel it after a pang, so deep, so fatal, that it could bear no second, but had sunk lifeless under the shock—no, it was none of these,—they were each and all as blessings to me. And, though I know it was impossible, I now sometimes think that if I could have still continued near her, have still looked upon her, and told the ear no longer sensible to sound, how I doted on that inanimate form; how I lamented the spirit that had fled; how gladly I would have died to save her, or would now die to bring her back,—

my reason would not have deserted me. But this in itself perhaps was madness. Yet I seem not to myself to have been so afflicted, till, in spite of entreaty or remonstrance, I saw that coffin lid replaced, which excluded her from my sight for ever. Oh, I can still hear the grating of those dreadful screws that shut her at once from me and from the world !

I continually repeated, " I have seen her," — " I have seen her !" — In my sane mind I even now often repeat the self-same words ; but I then believed that I saw her daily. A female figure, morning and evening, appeared before me, and I gifted it with the name of Henrietta ; yet not all in madness either, for I did not think she had not died, but that, as a seraph, she descended to console me. I talked and was consoled. As I grew better, the figure changed, as I believed, to that of Mrs. Elphinstone ; and when I found it had been delusion, the

weight of that disappointment drove me mad again. The vision, however, no longer haunted me,—I prayed to see it once again, but it came not ; and at length my reason was restored.

Kind and skilful treatment restored me ; I began to ask for employments, to recollect who I was, and where, and why ; for, in common with many who are similarly afflicted, I had foregone my own identity,—I had disdained to be Miss Forrester.—Ah ! what wisdom in the exercise of this prerogative of madness, to scorn to be that which must of necessity be wretched ! —I may not dwell on it.

But I will relate one little circumstance which at the time affected me considerably, when, in this amended state, a gentleman, a physician as I judged, came to me, apparently to examine if I were indeed recovered. He spoke to me with kindness ; and, I observed, often repeated my name. My eagerness to be pronounced

well, I am persuaded, prevented his decision at this interview from being favourable; for, when I said to him, "Oh yes, I know now that *I am* Miss Forrester," I strove to smile, to keep away the tears which the melancholy avowal brought with it, and he shook his head. I remarked it, but he continued :—

"And you could talk then, Miss Forrester, of the events of your life as I would do, without extraordinary emotion?"

"Oh! yes, I could talk, Sir, to you, to any one, — of my mother,—of all,—of every body, —of Henrietta,—she is dead, Sir,—did you not know it? We were the children of one mother,—but she *is* dead, for I saw her—in her shroud."

It was in sanity of mind that I said this, but because, in the natural burst of grief which accompanied the first mentioning of the name of Henrietta, I took the hands of the person who

listened to me, and looked imploringly for that pity which I thought he must feel, it was considered otherwise. He passed his hand before his eyes and said he would see me soon again. He did so. I preserved my self-command, and Mrs. Elphinstone conducted me to my home.

I have little more to tell.—When it was thought I could bear it, Lady Harvey came to visit me. Pity, they say, killeth envy. In her it seemed to have destroyed all enmity, even all recollection of self; every thing seemed to be erased from her heart and mind but a waking spirit of remorse. I had thought it impossible for me to experience so deep a feeling of surprise as that which took possession of me when I found myself utterly subdued by her tears. How genuine must they have been to have had this influence on one long accustomed to regard

the expression of her feelings as either assumed or artificial ! She implored my forgiveness for the part she had acted ; I willingly accorded it, though I knew not why she implored it till I heard from her own lips, till she avowed with a candour of which I should have judged her incapable, that she had first sedulously endeavoured to bring about the marriage between Edward Hamilton and Henrietta because she knew that I had long loved him : and this, when Henrietta went to her in tears and in misery, she had told in order to console her ! She listened tranquilly, but her already burdened heart could not bear such an additional load of anguish. She spoke not again, except to repeat my name in pity and in love. She saw Edward,—heard from him all that he could tell,—blessed us both and died !

Dear, injured Henrietta ! — through her whole life how had she been misjudged ! I had

considered her as a being possessed of feelings gentle, sweet, and amiable; but of none that could become powerful or acute, and she died their martyr. Lady Harvey, who had known her from her childhood, believed her capable of enjoying a triumph over her sister, and by a rash avowal added to the bitterness of death.

I have also seen Edward Hamilton; but, how changed from the Edward Hamilton I had before beheld! Yet I would not have him look otherwise than he does: his altered brow bears the stamp of deep internal suffering. When I think of him, I could wish him to be calm,—to be resigned. If a new thought or feeling is unexpectedly awakened in my own heart, from which I derive tranquillity or consolation, I wish him to experience it, for I also know what his wretchedness has been; but when I see him, I cannot wish him other than he is. If he were to indicate even a capability

of being cheerful, I am afraid I could not bear him in my sight. We have passed hours and hours together, the minds of both filled with the same sad subject, yet each unable to communicate by words the thoughts which each was equally desirous of imparting. But I think he knew more truly what I felt than if I had spoken. There is a language in tears as well as in looks. We can tell when they flow bitterly, repentantly, in compassion, or reproach. Edward once replied to mine :

“How good, how kind, not one reproach !”

I understood him. He did not merely mean that I had abstained from uttering a reproach, but that he read, he felt, he knew there was not one lodged within my heart. And he was right. Reproach him ! I have never once reproached him ! As well might the blossom, when it fades and dies, reproach the breeze that laid it open to the sun, rail at the warm

ray in which it basked, or the rain on which it fed, as I reproach the love that laid me low. Pity, Edward! is all I now feel for you; but I *did* once love you, and that love was a light in my path,—a wreath around my brow: if too fervent, too constant, too full of hope, too little misgiving, the fault was mine, not your's. If I should die before you, dear Edward, think of it only thus:—it is my best wish for you, and shall be my last!

One effort more and I have nothing left to record. It is due to Mrs. Elphinstone,—to the friend who never leaves me,—to Mr. Leslie,—to Colonel Forbes, who have all evinced so deep and constant an interest in my welfare, to state, that, as far as gratitude can make a human being happy, they have rendered me so. Let this console them for that determinate resistance which I have made to all their amiable

endeavours to lure me back to the world:—I appreciate their efforts and the motive. But I could not yield to them. I have indeed felt how sweet it is to have my gratitude to Heaven strengthened by means of earthly ties, on which, as long as life animates, and human affections cling around, my heart, I can repose with confidence and grateful love.

And now—there remains but to conclude. What I have written has beguiled some weeks of tediousness and pain; and is as fair a record as my mind can give of its own emotions; yet on perusal is very far removed from what I thought it would have been. I can scarcely call it even a faithful transcript; for, though I have nothing altered, nothing extenuated, I still find, that by dwelling long on trifles, because of the relief it afforded me, I have accorded to them an importance which they never possessed, and have hurried over many that

were prominent and important, because to dwell on them brought back distress. Ere I began to write, I looked within my soul, and there beheld darkness and “dimness of anguish;” to my own eye there was majesty in the might of my sorrow—my view was then confined to it, and it alone. But as I have proceeded, as I have turned for comfort where alone it can be found, I have thought and felt for others, and, amid the vanity of human wretchedness thus contemplated, have learned to think lightly of my own. In probing our own wounds, we pity ourselves, and thence learn compassion towards our kind.

I have said, all things are to be endured : I hope I feel that they are ; but let us not the less compassionate those who are called upon to endure, even though the measure of their affliction appears unworthy of comparison with what we ourselves have suffered. I have also

said, I am resigned to life: this I humbly and devoutly trust is also true. And to those who have known what it is to wait for death, to hope, to pray for it—to those who have yearned for the dead as a mother for a child that has been taken from her—resignation to life, without the love of it, is perhaps, in our imperfect state, the highest atonement we can offer, and one of the greatest triumphs which religion can achieve.

CONCLUSION,

BY MRS. ELPHINSTONE.

“ I HAVE finished,” said my poor friend, “ all of my sad story that I can perform,” as she put aside her pen. “ Do you complete it for me.”

I silently took possession of her MS. and hoped to divert her thoughts, for I too clearly divined to what event she alluded at its termination. But she continued: “ Yes, complete it, Jemima—for I have left much unsaid: in perusal it disappoints me—it appears to me that I have done justice to no party; yet it

should seem that I have been kept alive by the effort I made to record my sad history ; for it is strange, but true, that as I removed from before my eyes the paragraph which declared my resignation to life, the certain conviction that my last hour was not far distant flashed across my mind, and a cold shudder crept through my frame, as if to announce to me that I had not yet overcome the world, and that to the last I was self-deceived."

She held out her hand to me ; and as I pressed it between my own, I strove to reassure her and reconcile her to herself, by solemnly stating to her my own belief, that the natural dread of death which she had experienced was by no means irreconcilable to her love of God. That, on the contrary, the desire of life, framed as her mind now was, would best proclaim it.

Alas ! with mistaken fondness, I longed for

this re-awakened wish in her, as if it alone could have secured to her lengthened existence, bid her pulses again beat healthfully, give vigour to her frame, cheerfulness to her mind, and forgetfulness to her heart ; for, all this was requisite before the boon of life could again be to her a blessing.

But her own views, drawn from the depths of her heart, and blending as they did with bright and righteous hopes, were superior to mine. I endeavoured to be her comforter, her supporter, and I stood as an untaught child beside her. From that hour, she never more spoke of fear—her time was chiefly passed in meditation, in reading, and in prayer. She spoke of her death with calmness, and the subject never seemed to agitate her, except when she found the consolation which she offered to me less effectual than she had hoped to render it. I could not bear that she should die, and

to the last I trusted that she would not. She wasted so gradually beneath my eye, while her mind seemed strengthening instead of declining, that, till a sudden and fearful change took place a few hours before her death, I was in part blinded to her danger. She had once expressed a wish, while writing her memoirs, that the voice of Edward Hamilton might soothe her dying hour—it was when speaking of the powerful influences of his voice, and of her former wish on this subject—and she had added with painful emphasis—“To think that this same wish should even now cling to me!—The soul is indeed unforgetting;—but no—no,—I must conquer this!”

And she had done so, or, at least, the desire of having it indulged, for she never again spoke of it. But, in the first moment that my fears were excited, her words recurred to my mind, and I had a melancholy pleasure in the hope

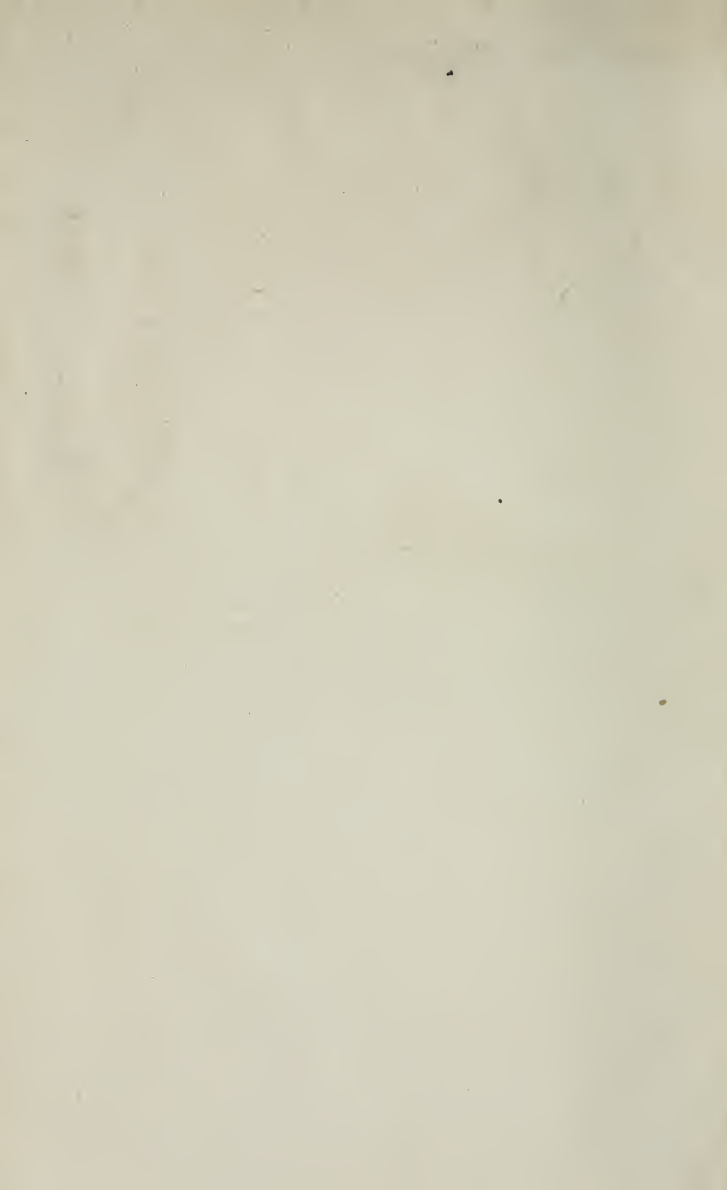
that, in this she might not be disappointed. I dispatched a messenger to Edward to summon him into her presence, and he arrived in time to receive her farewell,—to speak again to her in words of love and sorrow. How calmly she exhorted him to be happy!—How touchingly, when he again and again implored her forgiveness, did she tell him she had nothing to forgive!—Tears at intervals broke through her smiles of hope, as, raising her eyes and hands to Heaven, she mentioned the name of “Henrietta!” and added, “I shall meet her there.” She did not speak again;—the power of doing so deserted her before her consciousness in any degree failed; for, as Edward bent over her, he said, “Speak—speak, dear Constance!” and she smiled and shook her head to intimate that she could not. Edward had hitherto stood by her side; but now, with con-

vulsive agony, he clasped her to his breast, and so held her long after she had ceased to breathe.

THE END.

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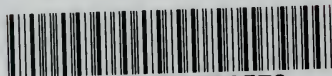




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